



**Report of 21st Century Social Work Review Glasgow Open Event
20th June 2005**

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the views presented by participants at the open event, Glasgow, on the 20th of June 2005, which was the third of four open events, held within Scotland. The event was designed to encourage the views of anyone with an expressed interest in Social Work Services and/or the Social Work Review and contribute to debate surrounding important issues within Social Work itself. Participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some were service users and carers, others front line social work staff and some were for example representatives from health, education and housing that had a relationship to social work services. The aim of the event was:

- To consider the implications of the findings of the review so far.
- To develop potential solutions to problems experienced within social work currently.
- To seek consensus on what kind of social work we need for the future.

During the event there were workshops held on ten topics that were focused on engaging participants to outline their vision of how the particular workshop topic should look in the future. Participants selected the workshop they wished to attend from outlines covering the following subjects and questions:

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, 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?

These groups then discussed in a further session, possible solutions to the issues identified within the ten workshops and considered how they could be developed into the future.

Following these workshops groups then went on to discuss how they could deliver their vision of social work from the morning session. Groups were asked to focus on solutions at the individual, local and national level. Other outputs obtained from the day were comments submitted to 'talk to the wall' sessions and responses to statements where participants were given the opportunity to vote on how strongly they agreed/disagreed with these.

Summary of Findings

During the workshop participants were asked to produce key points that highlighted their main points from their discussions. These points have been summarised below with further detail (where recorded) being given in the main body of the report.

1. Access to Services

- Empower communities by building on community development approaches being aware of other services/structures available i.e. in the voluntary sector.
- More resources required – strong message to ministers.
- Better information about services given to users covering how to access services and entitlement rights.
- Ensure that people are kept at the heart of services. Concern over language/terminology i.e. 'people who need support' rather than service users.
- Gate-keeping and restrictions need to be publicised to users making aware of the agenda up-front.

Making it happen:

- Better information about services to users and general public.
- Management has to be clear about what is/is not provided in order that the social worker feels empowered and the service user is aware of boundaries.
- Need information from users so that care plans are developed to meet their needs, with strategy linked to and informed from practice, holding management accountable.
- More support for front line workers so that staff are retained resulting in continuity for service users.
- Media campaign de-stigmatising social work and outlining services.
- Capacity built for people to make arrangements to meet their own needs.
- Scottish Executive to link up policy and provide a clear vision of social care.
- Additional funding and resources to support the developments required.

2. Integrated Services

- Services based on meeting needs of the user judged by better (integrated) performance measures.
- Must be driven by a shared vision (not just from social work) and avoid creating new barriers.
- Better clarity of roles for service users and providers in order to avoid duplication.
- Need better resources which are well managed focused on the long term view.
- Integrated political leadership needed especially from the SE.
- Ongoing evaluation of effectiveness and service improvement.

Making it happen:

- Shared vision, understanding and language
- Joint planning
- Statutory duty to implement integrated services and joint working
- Clear joined up political agenda

- Co-terminosity
- Career pathways across sectors
- Powerful integration managers to drive process
- Better IT systems to promote information sharing

3. Leadership and Management

- Positive political leadership from SE.
- Role of Chief Social Work Officer to be strengthened in terms of identity, clarity and vision. Should be a professional advisory role to local authorities at the director level.
- Greater investment in management and leadership training across organisations.
- Clear articulation of social work identity.
- Clear career pathways including national CPD and better links with the education community.

Making it happen:

- Social work should be a separate and distinct division within the SE.
- Stronger role for ADSW and COSLA in delivering 'social work voice'.
- Links built between education institutes and practice.
- Leadership training to evolve – being more flexible, longer term and properly funded.
- Strategy for positive media focus e.g. fast track
- Greater funding of social work services.
- National staff remuneration rates.
- Need to get the gender balance right – management positions generally remain dominated by men and masculine values whilst vast majority of front line staff are women.

4. Skill Mix

- Unified national career structure across sectors Including clearly defined grades and roles for staff at all levels.
- Better utilisation of admin staff.
- Computer systems that integrate with other service providers.
- One stop shops to services that share accountability. I.e. good examples in E.Dunbartonshire learning disability team, Clydebank older people's team.
- Social workers not making budget decisions.

5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes

- Joined up national systems across agencies.
- National training for admin staff.
- Single Shared Assessment – same information should be available across different professions.
- Access to information guidance - FOI and Data Protection.
- A national library of social work procedures managed by the SE.
- User friendly/needs led IT support with roving IT specialists.
- Generally enable social workers to do what they are trained to do.

6. Personalisation through Participation

- The tension between regulation, vulnerability and empowering practice needs to be carefully balanced.
- Good quality accessible information.
- Governance - users built into management structures e.g. in Direct Payments
- Investment in training - all those working with service users will need excellent communication skills.
- Need to learn from good practice.

Making it happen:

- Service users to be more actively involved in the assessment process at the point where the service is being designed.
- Independent national level service user and carers group based on local network groups
- Service user involvement in the development and delivery of education and training for social workers and social care workers.
- Increased role for community groups.
- Learning culture – look at research from abroad and allow sabbaticals for social workers
- Greater flexibility and innovation in addressing social care needs
- Creation of positive social work profile from organisational and political leadership and effective marketing campaign.

7. Prevention and Early Intervention

- Society is deteriorating – the responsibility to conduct preventative work lies with more professionals than just social workers.
- Universal services have to identify those at risk and often intervene themselves.
- Social work needs to be freed up from assessment to be able to intervene effectively i.e. the core social work task.
- Social work is most effective within a multi disciplinary team (with education and health) confined to a geographical patch.
- Critical that experienced staff remain at the front line – resourced, supported and valued in order to avoid burnout.

Making it happen

- Need a national career structure (like in teaching) that is supported by a national pay structure that reflects and rewards experience. This would ensure that valued, experienced social workers were not 'lost' to management positions.
- patch work widely implemented – social workers being physically close to community and other professionals
- More joined up working between social workers and other professions including links with GP's and district nurses.
- Awareness of physical environment and available resources
- Joint training with other professions
- Increased informed information sharing (without it being referral) and good IT systems to enable this

8. Professional Accountability

- Learn from mistakes and near misses.
- Actively manage risk.
- Need public awareness, understanding and support of the difficulties involved in risk management.
- Quality consultation and supervision.
- Recognise and value experience.

Making it happen:

- Address the 'culture of negativity' in social work
- National policy agenda needs to be more linked up
- Minister for social work
- Give care standards, codes of practice etc the chance to work
- Individuals valued for continued learning and reflection
- Simplification of the assessment system
- Less social workers more auxiliary help.
- Social workers able to say no, can't do it all without feeling vilified
- Channels of communication that work both ways between management and staff
- Organisational focus on outcomes with risk management shared on an organisational level.

9. The Voluntary and Statutory Sector

- Develop more genuine partnerships between sectors.
- Improved mobility between sectors.
- Improved sharing of back house facilities.
- Central provider of free core documentation such as financial plans, training etc.
- Service user lead.

Making it happen:

- Minister for social work
- More positive promotion of social work from politicians and in the media
- Increased early intervention and preventative work
- Investment in technology enabling 'systems to talk to each other'
- Voluntary sector social workers able to do statutory work as part of the voluntary sector
- Managers back in touch with their roots having a case load.

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

- Social workers have a role as conflict managers and social activists challenging systems and structures.
- The whole person should be the starting point for social work. Social workers need to spend more time with service users.
- Specialist skills not specialisms.
- Outcomes more important than assessments.
- Integration standards would be helpful in identifying key professional roles – providing more clarity and understanding in joint working.

Making it happen:

- Recording – needs to be more accurate recording of unmet need and quantification of preventative work.
- Social worker pay scales need addressing – currently have ‘postcode’ pay scales and huge difference between practitioner and higher management salaries.
- Need to be honest about the finite nature of resources and therefore upfront about what can be provided/delivered.
- Need social activists at the local level involved in community work; promotion of community development work being part of the social worker role.
- Social work minister to support social work being a free standing profession.

Opinion polling statements

The following statements were displayed at the Glasgow event with participants invited to vote whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed. The following results were obtained:

1. For most Social Workers peer supervision is more valuable than management supervision.

No consensus on this statement, 16 people voted, of these 9 agreed with the statement, 11 disagreed.

2. There is a true learning culture in Social Work.

Out of 36 people that voted 26 either disagreed or disagreed strongly with only 8 agreeing.

3. Quality assurance should be about promoting and sharing good practice rather than top down inspection.

Clear consensus on this statement; 27 out of the 28 agreed or strongly agreed; only 1 disagreed.

4. The way we deliver social work services promotes independence.

Strong disagreement with this statement; 26 people out of 33 either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

5. We need a completely new approach to handling access to services.

Agreement with this statement; 23 out of the 28 voters either agreed or strongly agreed.

6. Local authorities provide an ideal environment in which professional practice can thrive.

Disagreement with this statement; 27 out of 34 voters either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

7. We need a new kind of partnership between local authorities and voluntary organisations.

Overall agreement with this statement; 31 out of 33 people either agreed or strongly agreed, only 2 voted neither and 0 disagreed.

1. Access to Services

1.1 How Social Work Services could be modernised to deliver more flexible hours when mainstream services would be available, more integrated services, less stigmatised services, more proactive services and more direct services through self assessment:

The group's discussion around the production of more accessible services produced the following suggestions:

- There is a need for services and how to access them being better advertised to increase public awareness levels.
- Build community capacity and raise of awareness of member's different needs.
- Service user consultation needed to be more effectively arranged and more proactive.
- Service User entitlement – social workers need to empower users explaining what their rights are e.g. when it comes to health users have a clearer understanding of what they are entitled to. Social workers should honestly contextualise the service user's needs against what services and resources are available.
- Range of roles – need to enhance the role of social care workers being trained and valued with available career paths.
- Need to set up specialist services and learning disability teams.
- Develop a more casual style e.g. drop in services across health in GP surgeries, the voluntary sector, community centres. This would reduce the stigma associated with using social work services whilst also making service users more accessible to each other.
- Joint resourcing of integrated services.

1.2 Whether different models of service delivery would be needed for rural and island communities:

The group felt that there was no one model of service delivery suitable for all communities but rather that different tailor made models were needed. They went on to more generally discuss considerations for models, key points raised were that a balance between planning for the long term and responding to changes in communities would need to be struck, community development approaches would be key; building capacity 'to look after their own', research needed into what (specialist) services were needed in different communities and following from this the development of area based services.

Making the vision happen:

- Resources from across sectors need to be shared more
- Improvements to the single shared assessment process needed since it is not working well for complex cases.
- Networking and development of relationships 'on the ground' needed
- Empower communities – giving people information as to what they can actually do e.g. how to support children who are in need of protection.
- Information to other public services on the role of social work e.g. schools.
- National campaign on demographic changes happening in society. Need to widen understanding about care in the community
- Support and training for workers to remain in communities increasing continuity in worker/user relationships

- Gatekeeping and restrictions should be publicised – honesty about finite resources.
- Joined up policy from the Scottish Executive.

2. Integrated Services

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

The group outlined the following aspects to what they understood 'integrated services' to mean:

- Integration can not be driven only by social work 'vision' must be shared
- Starts from the needs of the client.
- They need integrated performance measures
- Integration can not be static, needs to be an ongoing process.

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

The group felt that it was important that as new service delivery models developed they should not lose their contacts and links with other parts of social work. Crucial to retaining these links was a clear social work role that was well supported.

2.3 The potential benefits of integration:

The group came up with the following list of benefits:

- Better outcomes for service user
- Better shared information for planning
- Better clarity for service user
- Better coordinated, more effective services, with less service duplication
- Shared knowledge and better skills
- The sum is greater than the parts
- Clarity of roles
- Shared responsibility
- Potential for innovation

2.4 How barriers to integration could be overcome:

- Better integrated information systems
- Better defined information to be shared
- Clearly defined professional role for social work
- Effective management
- Better integrated leadership
- stronger political leadership and support for social work
- More integrated SE providing guidelines and performance measures
- long term perspective
- Ongoing critical practice review/evaluation
- resourcing integrated working properly.

Making it happen

The most important factor identified in making integrated services a reality was all parties being committed to a shared vision using the same language. The group then broke down what needed to happen at the national, local and individual level:

National

- Joint planning for integrated services
- Statutory duty to implement integrated services/joint working
- Requirement for local joint funding for pay
- Joined up consultation via community planning
- Need a clear joined up political agenda
- Coercion
- Co-terminosity – need to share boundaries - this would speed up processes
- Review should examine things that social work doesn't need to do and who should do them
- Interviewing children should be seen as core skill
- Career pathways for everyone – beyond 10 years/top of scale
- Feedback from line experience into education – joint lecturer/practitioner post
- Education fit for practice
- Greater breadth in placements

Local

- Community health partnerships are an opportunity to deliver integrated services
- Appoint powerful integration managers to drive process (based on community schools model)
- Involve all stakeholders
- Ongoing evaluation driving system improvement
- Single point of contact for the user
- Redefine the professional role of the social worker and others who deliver integrated services – OT's, admin staff
- Better IT systems to promote information sharing

Individual

- Enable others, pass on learning
- Be open to integration
- Be positive about the role of social work
- Be constructive – be a missionary
- Feedback after referral
- Promote what is already there: collaborative working, shadowing and peer support
- Learn from best practice

3. Leadership and Management

3.1 What is meant by improved leadership and management in social work services?

- Leadership and management are different.
- Assumptions are made that social workers have management skills. This needs to change recognising that skills have to be developed, they are not automatic.
- Leadership can be from different places in organisations e.g. practitioners can be leaders.
- The role of the Chief Social Worker should have a key role in developing leadership culture.

3.2 The barriers are to improved leadership and management:

- Drift – on the national and council political level and individually
- Diminished professional identity
- Different professional boundaries - politically frustrating when social work works across boundaries and there is a lack of a common language.

3.3 The particular skills, competencies and/or behaviours needed for leaders and managers now and/or for the future:

- Able to work across boundaries
- Speak from a sound value base
- Able to work in a participatory manner engaging management skills
- Able to empower staff throughout the organisation
- Clear vision
- Values defining pattern of service delivery, management of staff and involvement of service users

3.4 How professional leadership in social work services can be developed:

- Through education
- Engagement with the academic community
- Development of standards
- Early identification of talent and skills in the workforce
- Ongoing practice and management training

4. Skill Mix

4.1 The roles needed to be developed to improve the skill mix within social work services:

In order for social workers to do their jobs more effectively they needed supportive systems behind them. A recognised national qualification and career structure was needed in order to attract a diverse range of people and achieve the right skills mix. There needed to be standard recruitment and workforce planning.

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

The group felt that a total review of the care services structures including pay and conditions was needed in order to achieve parity between social work and health.

5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes

5.1 Reducing/ cutting the level of paper work:

The group felt that the key consideration was to enable social workers to do what they were trained to do. A number of different tools could be used such as document image processing and tablet technology to reduce bureaucracy and free up skills.

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

In order to locate systems that had successfully cut paperwork investigation outside of the public sector needed to take place e.g. looking to the corporate sector for systems that work.

5.3 Developing new and different systems and roles to reduce the burden of paper work:

The group listed the following key ideas for different systems to reduce the burden of paper work:

- National guidance on information sharing from the Scottish Executive.
- Single shared assessment – the same information should be available across different professions.
- Total review of care services, pay and conditions structure within social work and health to achieve parity.
- User friendly/needs led IT support with roving IT specialists.
- National library of procedures.

6. Personalisation through Participation

The group believed there was a lot of rhetoric surrounding the subject of personalisation and they questioned how much it was actually happening in service delivery. A concern from service providers was that they did not have adequate training to deliver services in this way. They felt that the personalisation agenda presented particular challenges for partnership working, especially with very vulnerable groups such as young children and families.

Making it happen

The group identified a number of ideas that could assist in delivering the personalisation through participation agenda:

- An independent service user and carer group based on local network groups to be consulted in the policy making process.
- Service user involvement in developing and delivering education and training for social workers and social care workers.
- Qualification structure for the different levels of service delivery staff.
- Increased support for social workers.
- Increased role for the community e.g. community housing associations - local individuals empowered to run own social housing schemes. This model has potential to be applied to areas other than housing such as social care through local management boards.
- Question of whether too parochial in Scotland; centres of excellence/research from abroad is rarely adopted. More of a learning culture needed.
- Sabbaticals for social workers.
- Greater flexibility and innovation in addressing individual social care needs.
- Organisational and political leadership to promote the social work profession across sectors.
- Creation of a positive media profile through the use of effective marketing e.g. Edinburgh TV programme.

7. Prevention and Early Intervention

7.1 How social work strikes the right balance between early intervention, prevention and response to crisis:

The group started their discussion looking at what was meant by the terms early intervention and prevention. They decided that they were very different but interlinked. They felt that there had been a very strong role from early intervention but not much preventative work. They felt that if social work practice was good generally a by product would be prevention. Further they felt that early intervention work could prevent escalation into crisis. Overall in terms of striking the right balance the crucial factor was the ethos of keeping the user at the centre of any work. The challenge that preventative work created was how it could be measured and demonstrated e.g. how do you account for a situation where you effectively prevent someone from entering the system?

7.2 The role social workers should play in early intervention:

The group all agreed that social workers should be playing a larger role in early intervention work, however they identified a number of barriers that were preventing social workers from doing so. One of the key barriers was limited time in that because of the workload management system social workers only had time to do statutory work rather than therapeutic work. They also rarely had time to look at research and reflect on their own practice.

A further barrier was that local authority social workers did not feel enabled to conduct early intervention work. There was also not enough joint responsibility with accountability always lying with the social worker. The outcome being that local authority social workers often ended up moving to the voluntary sector. Staff needed to be able to move in and out of different areas such as local authorities to the voluntary sector and back.

Concerns were identified around the lack of a proper career structure in social work with senior practitioners being faced with the decision of whether to remain practising (and not be financially rewarded) or move into management, cease having caseload responsibilities but be financially rewarded. There was also concern raised about the quality of social workers coming through fast track schemes in that they did not have the skills to make good assessments. These skills could only be developed through experience. In general the group felt that more needed to be done to drive up the quality of depth of social worker intervention skills through allowing experience to be developed and this experience utilised.

The main vehicle through which social workers could play a more integral role in early intervention work was through community/patch work. Social workers would then become well known and trusted in the community. The group felt that this would enable social workers to employ their knowledge and skills more usefully e.g. it could be easy to predict when problems arise with teenagers – it was currently frustrating not being able to do anything. Community work needed to be based on the linking up of professions, responsibility being shared rather than all with social work.

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

The group felt that social work was doing too much fire fighting and not enough early intervention work. The biggest barrier being that too much time was taken up by paperwork and filing resulting in a lack of time to focus on more important

things. There was a lack of good systems in place with social workers having a tendency to write too much. In general social workers needed to be brought up to date with technology through training which would save a lot of their time.

The group felt it was important that social workers approached every case positively whilst accepting that there would always be situations they could not change. The role of learning and teaching would be key to this. Social workers needed to be empowered to work creatively and to make changes to their working practice. They needed to be able to trust service users more.

7.4 How we can measure or evaluate the effectiveness of early intervention:

In response to this question the group felt that the challenge of measuring/evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention work lied with more than just social work services. The problem for social work was that a lot of the work done did not have instant results, but would take years to become apparent. Overall the most obvious way of measuring the effectiveness of early intervention work would be that previous service users would not re-enter the system.

Making it happen:

- There should be a career structure like in teaching with a pay structure that reflects experience - social workers tend to move into management posts because they get paid more but they would like to stay practitioners.
- There needs to be a national pay structure - different terms, conditions and pay with local authorities means lots of social workers moving around local authorities
- Patch work - social workers need to be physically close i.e. located with other professions enabling them to get to know them and the people in the community.
- Part of post qualification training needs to be leadership and management.
- Have to be much tighter about what a social worker is and what social care workers are. However there is a danger of over-defining what social workers do – small acts of kindness can help in building relationships – would hate a situation where you have to say no to doing a small thing which might significantly help someone.
- Joint training with other professions
- Need to support carers and assist in spotting where crisis might arise and then work together to avoid.
- Longer term funding.
- Retain experienced staff.
- Need to have nationally compatible software systems.
- Need to implement multi disciplinary meetings on a regular basis.
- Better relationships with GP's and district nurses.
- Give opportunity to service users to input into case files themselves.
- More informed information sharing without it being referral.
- More research into early intervention.

8. Professional Accountability

8.1 Ensuring organisations can enable social workers to practice autonomously within the context of the organisation's legal and statutory requirements

One of the main concerns that the group had was that new social work graduates had been trained to be autonomous however there was a skills gap in that existing staff had not received autonomous practice training. This therefore needed to be rolled out across all social workers. In general there needed to be a commitment to continuous educational development.

In terms of risk adverse organisational cultures it was felt that clearer information needed to be given to social workers in terms of 'where the goalposts were' to enable them to practice, confident in the knowledge of where their professional responsibility sat, and how the organisation would support them. Overall social workers needed to be able to work autonomously whilst supported and feeling that they were not alone.

Other measures that organisations could take to enable autonomous practice suggested included reducing caseloads so that social workers had more time with 'direct care'. Workers also needed effective supervision, better support, ability to build more of a therapeutic relationship and generally increased flexibility in the way they were permitted to work. Budgets needed to be devolved making individuals more independently accountable.

8.2 The implications for practice if social workers assess and manage risk:

It was felt that the implications for practice if social workers were to both assess and manage risk would be that they would understand why people were in certain circumstances and would then be able to provide services to better meet people's needs. This more in-depth work would help to develop care provision and relationship between the social worker and service user. The overall outcome would be that the service user would be empowered and the social worker would be able to make effective use of risk management. Social workers would be able to see the risk management process through; assessing both need and risk and evaluating the effectiveness of the care plan.

8.3 Managing multiple accountabilities for social workers professional practice in relation to the person using the service, their employer, the Scottish Social Work Services Council and the wider public:

The management of social worker multiple accountabilities required a change in culture and workload. It was felt there was too much blaming of social workers which often resulted in social workers becoming defensive in risk management. Social workers often felt unprotected as professionals and the group felt that the protection of social worker rights was needed at the organisation level. This would help to raise the status of social workers. Society needed to recognise that responsibility for social issues lay not just with social work services but with other public bodies such as the police, health and education.

8.4 Promoting and developing greater openness to learn from mistakes:

The group felt that social work needed to learn from near misses and that there generally needed to be greater acceptance that mistakes will happen as risk could never be completely eliminated. a cultural shift was needed to enable the noticing of mistakes without resulting in simplistic blaming alongside the

acknowledgement of where practice had gone well. Overall there needed to be more time for reflective practice, a learning culture, less focus on paperwork and more trust in social workers.

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

The group felt that currently supervision was not playing a strong role in promoting accountability but rather provided a 'tick box' function. Professional supervision needed to accredit experience thereby increasing individual social worker autonomy. Currently there was an inability of supervisors to recognise autonomy.

Making it happen:

Nationally:

- Clarity of social work role including what social workers could not 'do it all'.
- Address culture of negativity in social work.
- Joined up policy agenda.
- Minister responsible for social work.
- National guidelines on Single shared assessment.
- Need to build on the strengths already there and allow things like care standards, codes of practice etc the chance and time to see if they work.

Locally:

- Forums where issues and themes can be raised.
- Effective supervision and management.
- Time for personal development, to read and reflect. This needs to be valued as an important part of daily work.
- A sustainable workforce.
- Less social workers more auxiliary help.
- More preventative work to reduce workload - doesn't always have to be done by qualified social workers.

Individuals

- Work load management.
- being upfront about the limited nature of resources.
- Feel they can say 'no' can't do it all, without feeling vilified.
- Feed up information more effectively. Channels of communication that work both ways. Some kind of intermediation to help link people up.

9. The Voluntary and Statutory Sectors

9.1 The future involvement of independent organisations in policy development and strategic planning and in the provision of services:

Independent organisations felt that their knowledge was not being tapped into for policy development and they wanted more access to consultation documents. The group discussed how One big umbrella organisation for all voluntary organisations would assist increased involvement of these organisations. In general the group felt that Resources should be more fairly shared out.

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

The group discussed how the voluntary sector had more of these skills than local authorities. In terms of developing more of these type of services increased multi-agency teams were needed with more autonomous social workers. Other enabling factors included better, rather than more monitoring, and services being need rather than funding led. The issue of many agencies providing the same service also needed looking at.

9.3 More responsibility and accountability for services in relation to projects within the voluntary sector and how this could be managed:

The group felt there were a number of measures to increase the responsibility and accountability of the voluntary sector including:

- more central support to give free policy documents; they should fit the national standards
- Voluntary organisations to get tougher and say this is how much we need to provide the service Not be told by the local authority you will provide this service at this cost.
- Tendering should be less about most competitive and more about best value service and best service.
- Voluntary organisations need to use umbrella organisations more to help provide better services on the ground.
- There needs to be more honesty and realism about the services that can be provided.
- Voluntary organisations need to focus more on the quality of and innovative services that they can provide.

9.5 What good partnerships between the sectors look like and the factors that enable/inhibit quality service provision:

The group agreed that partnership relationships needed to be more equal with local authorities providing better partnership support to voluntary organisations. More inclusion of voluntary organisations that provided free services was needed. The group identified the following factors that enabled/inhibited quality partnership service provision:

Enabling factors:

- Better use of technology to share ideas and make organisations more effective.
- More joint training and secondment.
- More inclusion of voluntary sector in legislation.

- Clarity about why assessment is being done - the right kind of assessment at the right time with assessment driving practice.
- Reduction in tendering time to avoid crisis.

Inhibiting factors:

- Scottish Executive drives on flavour of the month.
- Costs not being compared on a like for like basis with local authorities not including support costs when costing work.

Delivering the vision:

- Politicians need to be more positive rather than 'spouting words'.
- More positive messages in the media - promotion of social work like the recent TV series.
- Minister for social work
- Joint working between MSP's and local councillors.
- Debate should be about what's wrong in society and not what's wrong with social work.
- Research into why people leave social work.
- Equal value has to be given to voluntary and statutory sectors to allow people to move between them.
- Increased early intervention and community work.
- Social workers released from paper work.
- Government need to reduce red tape and bureaucracy. Paperwork doesn't protect against litigation.
- Increase front line staff so that all vacancies are filled.
- Specialised support and managers to let social workers do their job.
- Investment in technology has to be in state of the art technology rather than the cheapest. Systems have to be able to talk to each other.
- Team working made much stronger.
- Further flexible working and hours.
- Single workers need better team and technological support. Management need to offer much better personal support. Practice supervision could/should be separate from management supervision.
- Get back to the confident, competent, autonomous social worker.
- More honesty with management and clients.
- The current fear culture has to change so that social workers can speak out confidently.
- Managers have to be able to say when a social worker isn't up to the job and remove them.
- Voluntary sector social workers should be able to do statutory work as part of the voluntary sector.
- Get managers back in touch with their roots and they should have a case load.
- Better training and pay for admin and social work assistants.

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

10.1 Defining what is a social worker:

The group felt that social workers wearing several different hats with one client could be quite confusing. There was also the possibility that some of the roles were actually in conflict with one another. This raised the question of whether more specific advocates were needed. The group acknowledged that social workers had certain responsibilities but felt that there had to also be corporate responsibilities. Frontline social workers needed to be able to be honest about what could be done realistically. The group felt that role of the social worker also needed to include community capacity development work and something about providing social activities for disadvantaged people.

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

The consensus was that currently social workers were not able to make the most effective use of their skills. The group identified a number of measures that could address this:

- More autonomous working e.g. being able to purchase service rather than having to pass to manager.
- audit skills and raise professional standards.
- retain qualified social workers.
- Recognise that the expectations of the client group have changed - people are more individual today and social work needs to learn when to say no.
- Need more admin staff and clarity about who does what.
- Assessment has to be done by someone who knows the client best thus achieving more accurate assessments.

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

The group felt that it was important that social workers were able to go into the profession in a broad that allowed them the space to see exactly what they wanted to specialise in. They felt that there was a need for generic training in local authorities prior to more specialised training and practice. A key consideration was that service users themselves were not 'specialist' cases in the sense that they themselves and their needs would change over time. The group identified separate advocacy roles as where more specialist roles could be needed.

Making it happen:

- More accurate recording of unmet need.
- Recognition of the good pieces of work/practice done by social workers.
- National pay scales.
- Scottish Executive Needs to deal with the root causes of problems i.e. poverty, disadvantage.
- Management should share social work values challenge bad practice.
- Social work should be needs led and not resource led.
- Need social activists at the local level promoting a sense of community.
- Promotion of community development needs to be part of the social worker role.

- Team skills such as team building, time management and caseload management part of social worker training.
- Clarity on what social workers do and where social work sits in Scottish society.
- A social work minister
- Consider how well social work sits within local authority setting or whether it should be a singular agency within the Scottish Executive.
- Work better with all different client groups: define who could help, need to have money and involve the community.
- Need to be honest about finite nature of resources.

TALK TO THE WALL COMMENTS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- *More consultation please with front line workers*
- *Promote development of workers*
- *Managers need to remember their practice tools and better understand the changing nature of society*
- *Integrated managers to be within services to drive forward care activities for whatever client group*
- *Managers can only be effective if given a supportive and consistent political environment in which to operate*
- *Consistency and support when the going gets tough*
- *Management (not just social work) have to get their act together and carry out plans, not let them disappear without trace.*
- *Management need to be explicit about what they want and get workers to sign up. Re local authorities – need to be explicit about what will and what will not be funded.*
- *Have forgotten about the individuals they are supposed to serve. Appear not to care. Too focused on targets and budgets, not need of users.*
- *Leadership: what type of leadership 'model' does the service want to promote as a whole – disjointed at the moment – and should we be joining up with other public sector/voluntary organisations?*

SERVICE ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY

- *What about other professions being afforded the same as what you are striving for in your own profession if they work in social work departments i.e. OT*
- *Flexible and responsive at all levels. Develop the art of listening not just to what people say; it's not about the words used alone. Needs to be more than rhetoric*
- *Too cumbersome, complex, daunting to general public and users. Need for clarity, explanations, guidance through system.*
- *Patient centred services – needs led care. Flexible service*
- *Service users and carers in localised networks. Need to manage services.*
- *The whole area of commissioning services needs to be reviewed to ensure quality in service delivery.*

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

- *Staff need space and time to develop. Give them the skills and then the sustained opportunity to use them – job satisfaction, happy workers, staff retention*
- *Need first to be clear about what the agreed performance targets are! Need to have ways of measuring quality not just quantity.*

CONFIDENT, COMPETENT WORKFORCE

- *How does development of competencies link to workforce planning and development group?*
- *Social work needs a social worker who will listen and help them to achieve their full potential*
- *A vigorous rebuttal by Ministers of tabloid story that social workers will be prosecuted!*
- *Requires strong, supportive management*

- *General public and service users have lost confidence and faith in social work services. Need to restore this. Can only deliver effective, efficient service if users have confidence in frontline staff and management.*
- *Management and leadership that hangs in there with their staff and sticks their necks out for them.*
- *Need a strong professional body alongside the SSSC*
- *STOP politicians saying we must CHANGE – what do they think social workers have been doing in the past 15 years? How do they think new legislation is implemented!*
- *Will only be achieved if we talk from evidence not anecdote!*
- *There is little solid evidence for anything in science or life so evidence will only be 'best known' and will only apply in the social context and time it was looked at last.*

ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

- *Social work role could be more clearly defined. The general public are unclear what we do hence things go wrong... we are the scapegoats*
- *Accountability – need a working party to look at the parameters of autonomy and accountability. Can't be expected to work this out in sub group today*
- *Social workers do not leave training establishments with a strong sense of personal accountability – this needs to change.*
- *It is seen as unproblematic that there is a body of theory which underpins social work practice. If all social workers were asked to complete the sentence 'the e most important theories.....' would there be consistency? Doubt it.*
- *We desperately need stronger PR to enable us to publicise the positives – of which there are many.*
- *Should be able to build up relationship with service user; get to know them and their circumstances; see the whole picture. Need more time for each client. Individual client/user should be at heart of practice, not concern over targets, budgets. Respond to individuals listen to them. Social work needs to stop apologising for itself and hold a stronger professional identity.*
- *Make best use of qualified social workers time – support with paperwork etc.*
- *It is important to be clear about what if any differences there are in the role of qualified social workers and care managers in the field of community care. Do we need a 4 year degree in non-statutory areas?*
- *Working side by side with service users and carers.*

LEGISLATION

- *Follow Ireland and Wales. Remove Test of resources and or Environmental Adaptations for Children*
- *Too much simultaneous implementation of various pieces of legislation does not assist competence or confidence.*