



**Report of 21st Century Social Work Review Open Event
Wednesday 20 June 2005
Ramada Inverness**

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the views presented by participants at the open event, Inverness, on the 20th of June 2005, which was the second of four open events held within Scotland. The event was designed to allow participants to contribute to the debate on social work. Participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds. Service users and carers, front line social work staff and managers and representatives from partner agencies i.e. health, education and housing and the independent sector. 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 the kind of social work needed for the future.

Participants selected two of the workshops they wished to attend from the following outlines.

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. Suggestions for change were focused within the categories of individual, local and national approaches; however clearly defining approaches solely within one category is regularly problematic as a lot of overlap can exist.

Summary of Findings

During the workshop participants were asked to produce a number of key points from the discussion these are summarised below:

1. Access to Services

- Guiding principles for services have to be established that unify all the different contributors to social work service provision. Services need to be as direct, easy to access and relevant
- People need confidence and consistency in the staff
- There are a variety of complex problems that users can experience such as sensory impairment or some other disability being blind, deaf or disabled. Access to services have to take such factors into account within the physical environment in which services are provided.
- Assessment has to be effective and appropriate services.
- The correct support and back up has to be made available and be responsive to individualised needs.

2. Integrated Services

- Information sharing must improve between front line social work staff, management structures and national government, as well between agencies i.e. voluntary sector and health, education, prison services when the interests of clients are involved.
- Management has to be far more supportive.
- Learning together and learning from each other, to help develop skills in an integrated system.
- Creating a unified approach with a single point of access to help make services much more straightforward and directly accessible for clients.
- The Scottish Executive policy has to be much more engaged and considerate of front line staff needs and also more integrated across departments.

3. Leadership and Management

- Social work services need effective leaders that are good at guiding, who make well informed decisions are based on principles of respect for individuals and empowerment.
- There has to be national leadership that is supportive and strong, while at the same time not being too overpowering and controlling.
- Training for managers to develop the skills and qualities required for effective leadership and management.
- Leadership and management of social work services has to be less centred around process indicators, measurements and statistics. Leadership and management have to be influenced instead by outcomes and solutions and be more client centred.
- Enable management to acknowledge that social workers can't do everything and need to be allowed to say 'no'.

4. Skill Mix

- Administration and business management roles are essential to support social workers.
- Need to understand that skills required within social work services draw on a multi disciplinary background and multiple roles need to be developed.
- There needs to be a triangle of the professionals, para-professionals and business administrative support.
- SVQ models need development and simplification.
- National Standards need to be introduced in relation to induction of social workers. Education needs to be made more accessible and flexible to encourage roles to be developed.

5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes

- Systems and working processes need to work together and improve.
- Reduce the amount of paperwork the quality of the written work.
- Technological advances and innovative IT systems need to be introduced, shared as examples of good practice and constantly updated.
- Systems should serve the needs of the user.
- Develop new job roles to take the burden of bureaucracy off social workers. Delegate administration to administrators and employ financial/ management workers.

6. Personalisation Through Participation

- Manage expectation and ensure. Ensuring service users are aware of what is realistically an option
- Trust has to be built between users, funders and providers.
- Collective accountability, common responsibility and shared risk. amongst all of those involved in care provision and users and carer
- A consistent presence throughout assessment and care provision.
- There has to be a move away from short termism.

7. Prevention and Early Intervention

- Need a stable work force fully resourced, on longer term to ensure continuity of care for clients.
- Care planning which draws on a variety of skill mixes and professions to provide the most appropriate levels of care.
- More effective targeting of both resources and staff , to best respond to the problems and issues of clients at an early stages..
- Recognise social work as part of a much bigger system that provides to be much more integrated to effectively work together.
- Resources need to be increased to help reduce a crisis approach and enable prevention and early intervention to take place.

8. Professional Accountability

- Autonomy, independence and trust social workers to make decisions for their clients using their knowledge, skills and expertise.
- Social workers need the support and effective managerial guidance when managing risk to ensure decisions that are made are the correct ones.
- Eradicate the blame culture in social work with recognition that mistakes will be made but as long as decisions were not reckless or undertaken carelessly, support should stay in place.
- Supervision has to be in place to support the role of the social worker.

9. The Voluntary and Statutory Sector

- Longer term resource allocation in which the budgets are collectively coordinated amongst the sectors contributing to client care.
- Encourage joint training and placements for staff in all sectors.
- Make joint planning easier by introducing 'integration managers', service level agreements and innovate methods of communication amongst care providers.
- Ensure everyone involved within service level agreements is clear about their responsibility and accountabilities to clients, as well as having an understanding of everyone else's role.
- Develop good relationship built on trust and respect amongst service providers.

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

- Clearer definitions of the role of the social worker.
- Recognition of the skills and abilities of social workers, social work staff and the role social work play in care services.
- Improve the skills mix within social work services by increasing the number of social work assistants and clerical/administrative staff. and effective delegation of tasks.
- The importance of a generic social worker remit along with specialist roles.
- Social workers want to be able to build therapeutic relationships with their clients, and be more focused on delivering personalised services.

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; this focused on areas for improvement and change and are divided between individual, local and national responses. Some of these issues were previously outlined within the separate workshops and re-emerge.

National

- Strong leadership from the Scottish Executive
- Longer term planning in terms of policy and financial allocation
- Recognition of uniquely rural/island problems and ensure policy and resource allocation is geographically sensitive and aware.

- Improve pay and reward
- Introduce more and better training and CPD
- Need to develop a strong professional identity.
- Champion examples of good practice.
- Fewer demands should be made from national government in terms of information gathering.
- Examine the social system and consider wider issues of poverty.

Local

- Localised control over service provision
- Local authorities to support and protect social workers while allowing them some level of professional autonomy
- Localised joint working must be effective
- Community planning
- Local authorities and management must manage better the decision making process of funding and resource allocation and involve frontline staff.

Individual

- Empowerment and decision making more devolved to the front line
- Individual support and guidance to social workers
- More choice for users to tailor their needs within a network of multiple services
- Ease of access to information and to other professionals for social work staff
- Give social workers time for preventative work, direct work reflection and self management.
- Give social workers the chance to say 'no'. They cant do everything and should not be expected to do so
- More para professionals and support staff to support the individual social worker.
- Need to develop people's resilience and independence at the core of the social worker remit.

1. Access to Services

1.1 Modernising Social Work Services to deliver:

Modernisation within the delivery of services was thought to be very important for the future success of Social Work. Within the workshop, modernisation was believed to be able to stem from a variety of different kind of changes that could occur.

More flexible hours for Mainstream Services.

The set hours of the structured 9-5 working day, are not seen as practical and responsive enough for service provision. Crisis in clients' lives does not stop after five, and so the provision of support for clients should not stop either. It was

proposed to introduce a 'call centre' or 'help line, One call is sufficient to trigger at least some sort of immediate support. Out of hour services were seen to have to be, constructive and provide clients with relevant, useful advice and support. There was a lot of criticism of NHS Direct. Participants wanted to ensure that social work emergency services would be much more reactive and resolving of clients' issues.

More Integrated Services:

To respond to the problems of individual service users, in a personalised, tailored way, social workers have to recognise their place within the myriad of care services. They are required to work within complex care packages, in multiple relationship settings. Sometimes these networks can be hard to co-ordinate, highly fragmented and are underpinned by providers and professionals with different values, opinions and approaches to care. This is particularly problematic when an individual client has multiple problems and issues to be addressed.

In order for people to have confidence in services and the care they are receiving, networks must be well organised, highly structured and co-operative. Sound planning and strong service level agreements have to be put in place to ensure this occurs.

Importantly, participants felt that, a social worker does not always have to be the sole provider of client care. Social work should be more open to co-operation with other care professionals, who can equally be as responsive and sometimes actually provide the easiest and most effective services for users. However, other professionals need to be encouraged to take on more responsibility. Structures have to be in place, that helps every different service provider and professional gain the knowledge and understanding to be able to assess who should undertake what roles, to ensure care services collectively can provide the right kind of resources to meet the needs of service users.

Less stigmatised services:

Many services are currently seen as not being easily accessible to those with complex needs and problems. Examples given were poor, inconsiderate provision for the deaf, blind, disabled and those with learning difficulties and mental health problems. Social work has to be far more considerate, particularly in terms of people with multiple problems. Access to. Social Work services has to be made easier for the most vulnerable people.

More proactive services:

Participants felt services could become more proactive by encouraging empowerment and high levels of independence for users, rather than encouraging high levels of reliance and dependence upon services and their staff. This empowerment could not however leave clients insecure and unprotected, but instead should improve clients' quality of life. It was suggested that a secure, protected, well managed service that enables people should be the main focus for social work services, as well as a key task of the social worker

remit. It is this confidence that social work can instil in clients that is seen to as essential in providing effective care for individuals.

More direct services through self assessment:

There was consensus that the assessment phase is currently ineffective in terms of providing the direct access to social work services that respond well to client need. Regularly Participants felt that social workers regularly decide on care options that don't respond as well as they might to the client's needs. They see this as stemming from a lack of ability to have direct client time and effective processes of analysis in terms of the clients' experiences and sets of unique circumstances.

To help overcome this, social workers need to be given the time to be more consultative with their clients. This consultation process should also allow clients more opportunity to self assess their needs. Their opinions should be encouraged, and valued ,it has to be recognised that clients themselves often know their own needs best. However, it was also mentioned that sometimes, users do not know what their needs are and maybe well be unsure of what services are realistically available to them. Social workers need to continue to be, to some extent, controlling of the decision making process, applying their own initiative and sensibility though within a more guiding approach accounting for the views of clients.

1.2 The Different models of service delivery needed for rural and island communities:

Participants highlight the differences that physical environments have upon the models of service delivery that are required. People experience significant variations when accessing social work services and it is described as being much more problematic particularly within rural and island communities. These places have to be much better resourced to be able to provide the flexibility of hours, the quick, responsive help to problems and the best care providers with elements of choice for users. Much greater appreciation is needed in relation to problems of physical access within these places and models of care have to fit accordingly. An understanding that one size does not fit all in terms of providing access for users to services has to be recognised.

2. Integrated Services

2.1 How integrated services can be successfully created:

Integrated service are networks of co-working, co-ordinated staff who share knowledge and understanding, as well as the tasks involved within providing client care packages. These co working staff can come from a variety of roles and backgrounds out with social work as well as within it. Additionally, they need to have collective, shared values and common aims that are fostered within a strong team identity that combine both specialist and generalist professionals. Integrated services only work when everyone is clear about their role within packages of care and when everyone is applying their best skills and abilities to particular tasks. Strong foundational bases have to be in place to ensure this can

occur. A teambuilding culture and collaborative set of values needs to be fostered, that are cemented in trust. These integrated services should not work as a result of luck, but instead through careful design.

2.2 Integration with other services within Children and Families Social Work, Community Care and Criminal justice leading to the disintegration of Social Work and whether it matters:

There was recognition of an increasing amount of integration with other services and this was predicted to further increase into the future. There was an understanding also that a clear, defined, stand alone social work department is not a reprehensible concept. Social Work services are dependant upon other services whether it be within children and families social work, community care or criminal justice. Though participants were concerned that recognition had not been made of the role social work play within other services and how reliant others are upon them.

Considering this and the key role social workers play as a main figure in managing integration of services, acting as a common point of contact for users. They see their role developing and becoming more important rather than disintegrating all together in the face of growing connections with other services.

2.3 The Potential benefits of integration:

The Right Staff Can do the Tasks That Suit Their Training Best-

Within team run case loads, those most capable and suitable to conduct elements of care have to be contracted to do the tasks. This means specialists take on the more complex roles, less qualified members taking on more basic, straightforward tasks and social worker time can as a result be more freed up as this sharing collective approach develops. Providing the correct staff for tasks creates good care management with a strong client focus.

Better Targeted and Responsive Service Provision-

Services can be targeted more effectively when social workers break down the tasks they are required to do into, non social worker tasks and social worker tasks. In doing this, social workers can target the issues that they are only able to do and the rest can be contracted out to others, possibly with more expertise within a field as well as less. Sharing out a problem and taking the time over the areas social workers need to do, is recognised to be less time consuming, more financially sensible and deliver services more effectively to clients.

Participants recognise that as social work become more effective at responding to problems in this manner, they can become even more able to respond to problems in the early stages with preventative methods, rather than constantly 'fire fighting'.

Common Access Point for Clients-

A common access point makes client contact with social work services much more straight forward. For the social worker, planning care can be much more tailored to the clients needs as it can allow planning and assessment to be collectively put together with knowledge from a diversity of backgrounds to gain the best overview and understanding. Repetition and countless separate assessments can also be avoided both benefiting the client as well as social workers.

Collective Responsibility-

Further integration will encourage more collective responsibility and reduce the blame style culture that exists within social work currently, particularly aimed at the shortcomings of social workers. However, there was concern that everyone's responsibility soon becomes no ones responsibility. Firm guidelines and agreements have to be established to ensure everyone within an integrated team recognises their roles and responsibilities.

Developing Learning Culture-

As professionals work amongst different sectors and departments; the skills, knowledge and understanding of those involved can be shared. Social workers as well as other care staff can learn from each other and are particularly able to do this more effectively and to their advantage within a setting of integrated working.

2.4 Overcoming barriers to integration:

Uncooperative Integration With Suspicion, Mistrust and Disrespect for Contributing Services-

There needs to be more respect, trust and acknowledgement of non statutory care providers. They are strongly recognised as being undervalued, underestimated and undermined by the dominant statutory sector. Current levels of co operation, integration and co dependence are recognised as being badly developed here. Voluntary sector participants raised this issue repeatedly in terms of service provision, staff quality and effective response to client need. Voluntary providers were seen to be much more responsive, produce a higher quality and more cost effective services.

To be able to build the respect , trust and recognition for contributing services, introduction of common pay scales between the sectors have to be introduced as well as common targets, performance indicators and ideologies. Training and pre qualifications must have common strands across all social work services sectors that are united with a strong collective academic camp.

There has to be sound management to facilitate co working relationships and ensure they are effective and responsive to the issues of users as well as changing the practices and cultures of workers on the ground. Among management and front line staff, a 'networking team culture' has to be

maximised, where information sharing takes place and good practice is disseminated. Both the statutory and non statutory sectors have to be able to learn from each other.

According to respondents, not only is there mistrust between social work providers, but there is also mistrust amongst social work staff in relation to other related professions. Some discussion centred on encouraging a core year of study for all related professions such as nursing, teaching and social work that encourages a common foundation training. Another consideration was the idea of a journal club where different professionals present papers of common interest to people across professions.

The key to breaking the barriers of mistrust, suspicion and disrespect seemed to stem from solutions of breaking down stigma, pre conceptions and ignorance surrounding the social worker remit, the social work role and the part social work should play within wider care provision, not only amongst different sectors of social work, statutory and non statutory, but also from different care providers within a much wider setting such as health, criminal justice and children's services.

Poor Co Ordination-

Respondents were highly critical of the poor co ordination of social work services. Not only was co ordination seen as weak between the different social work care providers both statutory and non statutory, but also between the tiers of management within the statutory sector itself, as well as amongst the much wider care community in general.

Respondents felt strongly that social work services had to be well integrated at all levels. One particular example raised is better working relationships between management and the workers on the ground, who are directly involved with client care. To overcome issues of co ordination here, respondents felt that decision making had to become more simplified and nearer to ground level. Social workers had to be empowered and allowed to make more decisions in relation to providing and allocating resources. New kinds of managerial structures would have to be encouraged, as well as a less hierarchical structure within social work services itself.

Another example was concerned with executive policy. National decisions have to be integrated also. The executive itself has to produce initiatives and policy which do not undermine front line staff and individual users. Scottish Executive plans have to be relational and established on the real experiences of social work provision. As well as this, different departments within the executive have to join up their thinking. Different departments can't produce conflicting or counter productive policy.

Respondents agreed that there was too much emphasis upon individual staff creating joined up working. While many felt that individuals could contribute extensively to improving joint working relationships, they further highlighted that for it to be properly enabled changes have to come from management and

national influences also. The structures must be in place that encourages effective co ordination.

Co-ordination would also be more achievable where there were arrangements of co funding, shared budgets and collective long term planning.

The example of virtual teams in Orkney was considered by participants. Methods of effective, communication technology were considered to strongly help built relationships and break the barriers. It was believed that the model developed in smaller places, with more unified services and simpler networks, could be replicated on a larger scale and the principles of collaboration and co dependence produced within cities and more urban places alike.

Lack of Effective Communication Using Technology-

Respondents highlighted a variety of advantages that could be achieved from communal, collaborative, information sharing networks and computer systems that can 'talk' to each other amongst the different local authorities. Many participants also felt that the advantages to be gained from this could be further stretched to share information systems amongst non statutory providers as well as relevant sectors of the wider care community, such as health, police and housing services.

There was extensive criticism placed upon how poor the technological networks currently are, and the extent to which they are incompatible in terms of sharing information effectively. They do not inter relate and share to levels that could be potentially possible, that would aid the entire co operative, effective integration of services. Respondents felt information sharing and developing extensive knowledge of clients would be far more achievable through technological improvements.

There is a need to effectively integrate computer systems in order to share information. It was believed that this did not necessarily have to come from changing all the programmes authorities run on to a common system, but instead, some kind of internet database could be set up that would allow current systems to be retained within separate authorities.

However, by encouraging an opened up, free flow of information concern was raised over privacy rights for the client involved. Clearly there has to be a fine balance between the two. Many respondents felt the system would have to be highly regulated and controlled.

Accountability and Responsibility for Care-

As services continue to become more fragmented and widely shared amongst different professions and different kinds of staff within social work themselves, there is concern that confusion could exist over who is accountable for problems when things go wrong and also who is responsible for actually providing the care. To overcome these problems, respondents were highly supportive of a coordinator figure of service care. They would ensure everyone is clear what role they have to play and who is responsible and accountable. Service agreements

have to be set out prior to the beginning of care provision for clients, to ensure that these responsibilities and accountabilities are kept.

3. Leadership and Management

3.1 Leadership and management in social work services:

Leadership was considered to be very important for effective delivery of services. Any organisation has to be strongly led, guided and influenced by decisive, well informed leaders that are strong, respected and empowered.

Leadership within social work services more specifically has to promote participation, and be supportive and responsive to users. Leadership was also recognised as being able to be sourced from any level and any individual within the organisation, not only from more senior ranked officials but also from workers at ground level. Leadership can be exemplified on a national, local and individual basis and participants supported practices that encouraged leadership within all areas of service provision.

Management was seen as the more technical framework, structures, in which services are organised. Management is the tasks through which the running of the system is controlled. In relation to social work services, management's main role was seen to be the management of scarce resources.

3.2 Barriers to improved leadership and management:

There are a variety of barriers to improving leadership and producing more effective management.

Participants felt that leadership decisions which are made by social work staff are not always supported by managerial ranks. When problems arise and risks have to be taken, too much of the responsibility is put upon the individual social worker. Management need to take a more responsive, supportive role and cut out the blame culture that surrounds mistakes in social work services. Middle management has to become more accountable, and aid social workers in the risky decisions they take, to allow both social workers to lead more effectively as well as manage themselves.

There is also the problem of high levels of bureaucracy for management. Paper work is seen by participants as taking away management's time and ability to lead and manage social work services. Improved quality and a reduced amount of administration would allow for this.. Similar issues were raised in relation to the social worker. As social worker's time becomes more freed up, they are more able to lead and manage services better and to undertake more direct work with clients.

3.3 Particular skills, competencies and/or behaviours needed for leaders and managers:

Leadership has to be supportive and strong in a positive way that helps improve the quality of the work social workers do. It can't be overwhelmingly dominant.

There has to be flexibility and understanding recognising views and opinions within, and out with social work services.

Everyone involved in the provision of social work services has to be more pro active in the decision making process. Social work staff have to decide what they take on rather than being told what they should do. They need to have the confidence to make these kinds of decisions. To be confident, they have to be well informed and clear about the role social work plays in providing services to particular clients, as well as their individual role in this provision, and what part other sectors and care providers should play.

They need credibility and recognition to ensure attempts to manage and lead are recognised by all staff and all levels of management.

The skill to manage scarce resources is core to the tasks of leaders, how they can get the best out of what is available to them. They have to effectively be able to supervise, manage the working relationships amongst staff, communicate effectively amongst all tiers of services and support others.

3.4 Developing professional leadership in social work services:

To develop professional leadership in social work services, a variety of responses should be adopted across a variety of tiers of management.

Participants felt the Scottish Executive had to be more effective in terms of managing social work service provision. Criticism was raised over their 'sexy projects' that encompass quick fixes and flash plans designed to make the executive look good and ministers appear busy. Participants would rather see the executive being more responsive and assertive supplying funding for 'real investment' into 'real care' and for longer term planning. Decisions for change should also be less reactive to media comments and more concerned with the demands of service users and the front line staff.

Social workers also need better support from management. There needs to be more effective leaders who take on a more advisory role. This middle management needs to help guide social workers and take on some responsibility in relation to risk and problems that can arise in working with clients.

Social workers also want to take on more responsibility and develop their professional leadership. They want professional autonomy that enables them and allows them to make empowered and important decisions related to client care. Participants recognised that social workers have a lot of professional ability, skills and competencies and need to be given the freedom to take the lead and make decisions for their clients.

4. Skill Mix

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

Currently, there is seen to be a lack of specification of the roles and responsibilities of all staff within the social work care sector. Participants also highlighted a lack of respect and valuing of the role of the social worker and other front line staff in particular.

Participants see the social worker's remit to be one of complexity and great diversity, with multiple demands and high levels of pressure. Juggling and multi tasking are constant issues placed upon them and they are always having to balance the provision of care to their clients, as well as doing a variety of consultative work with other professionals and administrative work.

Most respondents felt social work needs to further develop a variety of roles in terms of support staff to the social worker, to help develop the skill mix within social work services and improve the quality and ease of the social worker's role.

4.2 Examples of business or administrative roles that work well:

Finance staff would be a positive introduction to running the business of social work provision. Budget control and financial planning could all be done by specialist team members from a business management background and they would, due to their training, have more effective and more efficient skills to do such tasks. Complaints were made by participants surrounding senior social workers, who may have little experience, lack of confidence and insecurity about the responsibility they may be taking on and regularly they have had little training and support while doing such business related activities.

Not only financial staff, but also more administrative staff were noted as highly desirable within the social work setting. Great proportions of social workers' time is seen to be spent on administrative tasks that could vary from, filing, photocopying, shredding papers or opening and closing files. Moreover, much of the paperwork demanded of social work staff is seen as unnecessary or highly repetitive. More administrative staff could reduce some of the burden of these activities upon social workers.

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

The participants further considered social work assistants, para-professionals, and the role they could play in supporting the work of the social worker. The respondents recognised the valuable role they could play in reducing the work load of the social worker. Respondents recognised that such roles could be more than just a general aid to a social worker, but also a role that could take on casework that is commensurate with their level of skills.

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

The social work structure is seen as over hierarchical, and this kind of structure is thought to reproduce complex power relations in terms of rank and position. This is seen as particularly problematic in terms of diversifying the skill mix such a structure was viewed as underestimating the important role that para-professionals could play, as not valuing the range roles that could be developed.

A less hierarchical structure that embraces and encourages all kinds of roles was recognised as being highly desirable among participants. To do this, a team culture has to be developed where values of collectiveness, co operation and shared responsibility for care provision are fostered. Tasks of social work services have to be responded to by supportive teams of staff, that are flexible and co dependant. A triad of development between the professionals, para-professionals and business support should be formed. Respondents felt this approach would produce a better service for users and create more positive outcomes for individual clients and create more job satisfaction for all workers within the social work setting.

Skills required within social work services, clearly draw upon a multi disciplinary background. To truly respond effectively to problems that clients within social work services have, a variety of roles, from a variety of backgrounds need to be drawn upon.

Training that recognises the importance of para-professionals has to be encouraged to ensure these changes can be put in place. Respondents suggested as a starting point the SVQ model which needs more development and simplification. Induction was also seen as important and requiring national standards.

However, caution was raised in relation to the extent to which tasks could actually be done by other professionals or members of staff. Some respondents said that social workers, despite being highly stretched, should be the ones to do the majority of the business management/ financial work, administration and client care. This was recognised as being necessary, as these areas play a significant part in providing effective care to clients whom social workers see as being their main role. When social workers having a complete, controlling influence over all elements of client care a better service can be provided. However, this issue was considered to be overcome by effective interaction and information sharing amongst a mix of social work staff within a team set up.

5. Bureaucracy, Systems and Processes

5.1 Reducing/ cutting the level of paper work:

Paperwork is seen to be growing, in terms of amount, and consequently in terms of unpopularity amongst social work staff. There is strong demand not only to, reduce the amount of paperwork, but more importantly, to increase its quality. Processes do not relate closely enough to the provision of core services and in fact can be unhelpful and time wasting. There is a recognition that

administrative tasks can't be completely eradicated and respondents recognise that these can be useful in providing effective care to their clients, particularly when it involves assessment, care planning, the production of reports and case recording. However, time needs to be set aside to ensure social workers can achieve quality, written work and concentrate on the administrative demands placed upon them.

5.2 Areas to target most:

The first area for targeting is the culture of achieving particular targets and indicators. Currently, this is focused on processes and outputs rather than outcomes. This approach is centred on ensuring targets are met rather than service user needs being fulfilled. Making performance improvement relevant to client care is of up most importance. This current mismatch results in bureaucratic systems serving political masters, rather than actual users of the service.

Secondly, the bureaucracy that surrounds allocating care to service users does not allow for detailed and personalised care plans to be implemented. It also does not involve sufficient interaction amongst partners to draw on the most appropriate resources and staff. This often results in a poor quality of service.

Lastly, participants recognised that social workers are not the only social work staff that need to have paper work reduced and the quality of it improved. Managers within the ranks of social work services need to ensure that they are effectively able to respond to their main managerial roles, which participants see as leading staff, and making and implementing decisions. Currently the amount paperwork managers have to do is decreasing their ability to conduct their managerial role effectively.

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

Computer systems that hold records in relation to clients and their care, are not effective enough at sharing data amongst other professionals and care sectors. In relation to bureaucracy, these systems are seen as producing duplication in terms of assessment and care planning across the different contributing organisations and for individual workers. Integrating and homogenising systems they would lead to less duplication and more accurate and less contradictory records.

By using video conferencing, the improvement to interaction amongst professionals and agencies and the productivity gains that can be derived were recognised by participants. Decisions can be made more efficiently and faster and the ability to share any kind of information, with the utmost level of ease can be achieved in relation to clients care plans with simplified consultation with other professionals.

More e-care should be developed. The sharing of information, and interacting with different care providers and individuals involved in relation to a client can be highly advantageous to all care providers. Electronic interaction can be

facilitated by more effective use of email and the internet. Internet technology can offer many solutions for a multitude of problems and while this is already being used to some extent, there could be more innovation to see if further advantages can be gained.

Many social workers have to use computers and computer packages which are very unfamiliar to them. Proper training and IT assistance is required to ensure social workers can act confidently and effectively and gain the full potential these facilities can offer. Social work staff need to recognise the gains and feel the benefits, rather than be threatened and feel further burdened by IT.

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

New roles within social work services need to be developed in lots of different kinds of supportive ways to reduce the burden of paper work upon social workers. In relation more specifically to reducing the burden of paperwork, two roles were suggested:

Firstly, there has to be more administrative assistants. Their role would be to do administrative tasks that are not always required to be done by a qualified social worker and are less specific to direct care such as filling, photocopying, correspondence or opening/ closing files.

Secondly introducing financial assistants whose role would be to organise financial planning and resource allocation.

However for such a skill mix to work good collaboration and communication has to be in place amongst all involved.

6. Personalisation through Participation

6.1 Current practices of 'personalisation through participation':

Evidence of personalisation is clearly rather patchy throughout Scotland's social work services. Exemplification of this was evidenced by the discussion around participants' different experiences of personalised services within their different areas. Respondents were strongly supportive of personalised services and wanted these to expand for the future.

Personalised services were recognised as individualised, using a participant engaging approach in which the clients' 'voices' are heard and considered at all stages of service delivery. Personalised services respond directly to service users needs which have been identified from detailed assessment and are then provided in an appropriate manner.

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

Resources- Resource allocation has to be introduced at a lower level, where staff on the ground can really decide how to meet needs most effectively, to deliver

the specialist elements of care required. Senior management are recognised as not being as able to decide in the same way due to their distance from local circumstances. Social workers need to be enabled effectively and empowered with the correct levels of responsibility to facilitate change. Currently there is a lack of time to allow for further involvement of users in the decision making processes surrounding issues of individual care needs and service provision. Effective engagement with clients is recognised as a time consuming but highly valuable process.

Power relationships- statutory involvement e.g. mental health, child protection, criminal justice- As services become more personalised involvement with a variety of relevant additional statutory services can be more easily put in place. Personalised services allow the time required to consider need in a detailed manner including an evaluation of the possible benefits of other statutory services and care sectors. Through identifying the most appropriate services this is more likely to effect the desired change. This will also encourage growing respect within the different sectors for each other, as well as develop a much clearer understanding of the roles social work play within the wider social care agenda.

Risk/ Accountability- There should be much more openness, transparency and honesty within social work services and their decision makers. Both risk and accountability should be much more collectively handled and shared. This would help reduce the victimisation culture of social work services and the social worker in particular. The whole issue of facilitating 'risk taking' though does require a sound model of supervision and mentoring.

Planning and commissioning of services- best value- Personalisation allows an element of 'self assessment' to be part of the assessment phase. Regularly, the user themselves can contribute most effectively in terms of the decision making process in relation to the services they require to help resolve or curtail their problems. By introducing their opinions the most direct root to care requirements can be made, as well as the fact that services that don't really respond to their issues are not wasted upon them with poor planning and decision making from social workers. However, recognition that service users are limited and do not always recognise what is best required to fulfil their need have to be taken into account. The social worker must continue to use their initiative and common sense. Their decision should always be informed but not controlled by users.

6.3 The strengths and weaknesses of the personalisation approach:

Strengths

Both users and professionals can have common goals and aspirations for care provision. This takes away the separation of the, 'them and us' divide.

Services can be tailored to empower service users. This was particularly seen to be important in relation to highly vulnerable and disadvantaged users. A personalised service gives users the support they really need while also recognising the importance of helping to empower them, as well as giving them independence and influence to form solutions that will really work for them.

The services being provided are much more 'needs led', and respond much more directly and accurately to the real issues and interests of the clients involved.

It creates a social worker role that can feel more associated with client direct care, which can more effectively assess and better provide for clients. They can fulfil the role much more appropriately in terms of what they see the 'real social worker' to be. This is seen to more than likely, boost the current depressed and disengaged work force at a time when social work needs to encourage people back to the profession and try and encourage new recruits to the training programmes available.

Time can be given to really understand the individual client. A good narrative of their history, relationships and interests can be compiled and understood. From having such a detailed understanding, sometimes small subtleties can be made to care provision in relation to very particular clients that can make a large impact upon the quality of their life.

Personalised services can encourage earlier intervention, and reduce the heavy burden that crisis responses have upon service resources and social workers' time. Early intervention is also in the interests of the service users.

Personalisation can generate creative solutions and innovative examples of good working practice.

Weaknesses

Hard to remain consistent in service delivery and at the same time provide a tailored specific care plan for individuals.

Problems of cost control. Can not afford to provide for everyone's needs fully within a poorly resourced service. Ensuring resources are fairly and evenly spread is a complex problem. Users need to be aware that not all their demands can be met even though they can be prescribed as the most appropriate solutions and responses to their needs. Service users must be made aware of the limitations the service has.

6.4 The enabling factors which allow this approach to be adopted:

Pace setters or champions for change on the ground could encourage other social workers to adopt practices of personalisation and encourage new and improved practices within the service.

Appraisals and rewards for staff and good practice could be introduced to encourage staff to provide a thoughtful personalised service to users.

Social workers need to keep their values and aspirations in mind within their everyday work to ensure quality and personalised care are delivered.

6.5 The factors which will prevent this from occurring:

Budgets are currently too controlled by management, local authorities and the Scottish Executive. For personalised services to be provided effectively, more control has to be passed on to front line workers who can be enabled to both assess and provide care to individuals within a system of managed control.

Social workers need to listen much more effectively to other professionals. A culture of valuing other members of staff has to be encouraged along with concepts of collective team work. Specialist skills within the different roles people play in relation to care provision whether they be para-professionals, support staff, social workers or professionals from different backgrounds, have to be recognised and valued for the job they do.

The quality of training has to be improved with the principles of personalisation built into the core elements of course learning. Not only within the social work degree will this have to occur but across the board for other training such as SVQs.

Information sharing amongst professionals is not seen to be currently co operative enough. Structures that can produce much more targeted and filtered information to the correct destination need to be in place.

Regularly the needs of a user can be recognised by the staff relating to that service user's care needs. However, service provision and resources can regularly not be matched effectively to provide for their observed needs.

The systems that social work services work within, the knowledge required to provide personalised services and the networks required to enable this kind of service have to be encouraged before personalisation through participation can effectively be put in place.

There is a lack of information and education for both users and providers of care. Need more understanding of what is out there and what untapped resources are available.

However, social work needs to want to change. It needs to adopt a new culture as well as just introducing new structures and new working practices.

6.6 The messages that can be transferred to the development of the social work role and the wider social care sector:

Personalised services and users opinions can provide benefits in achieving a more effective and efficient service. These will increasingly respond to the needs of users and carers, as well as helping front line staff and social work services provide what clients really require in a more personal and responsive manner.

In doing this, it is believed that public confidence in social work services could be increased. Job satisfaction within a variety of different roles within social work and the social care sector more generally could be substantially improved.

Social work and social care would become more about more about providing what people need and responding to their best interests. It becomes less about reaching targets, and being overly concerned with processes.

7. Prevention and Early Intervention

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

Currently, there is a lot of criticism surrounding the length of time it takes social workers to respond to concerns and clients' problems.

Participants felt, social workers work loads placed too much pressure upon their time. Being able to take the time to do preventative work and early intervention for clients did not take priority unlike crisis cases which are high priority and where their attention has to be placed.

There was a strong issue for service users about being prioritised as 'non urgent' and being placed at the back of a queue, as social workers are only able to spend their limited time on crisis cases. These 'non urgent' users can tend to gradually over time, become crisis cases themselves who then become highly disabled and reliant upon services, and this creates a much larger, more time consuming problem for social workers to solve. Intervention needs to set in much earlier to prevent this from occurring. Encouraging a fire fighting approach to social work actually increases the likelihood of creating dependency for service users. Through earlier intervention clients would be able to identify problems when they were developing. The process of rationing is completely irrational. Clients are sometimes creating crises to be seen by a social worker.

However there is the understanding that some element of crisis work will always have to be undertaken by social workers, however, the extent of crises could be reduced through more preventative approaches, with early intervention

7.2 The role social workers should play in early intervention:

It was believed, that to better respond to earlier intervention, more social workers was not necessarily the answer.

Social workers need to build resilience in their clients rather than solving their crises. Within the discussion there was some evidence of this occurring, however, this seemed to be rather patchy and not a consistent pattern of practice. Participants feel a social worker's remit is to meet the needs of their clients, but they are only ever able to do this to a certain extent. More could be done if they were better resourced and had more time.

Social workers want to promote independence and empower their clients.

7.3 Managing to focus more on early intervention, whilst at the same time continuing to deal with crises:

Need to improve recruitment and retention. Teams need to be fully staffed. Longer term, more fixed contracts are required to keep up continuity of care, as without longer term commitment from social work staff, inconsistency and poor quality care frequently occurs. Relationships of trust amongst social work providers and staff as well as clients can only be built up through quality contacts over long periods of time. Social work needs to be championed as an exciting, unified, consistent profession that can provide positive career choices that enable diverse, successful, well rewarded and regarded job opportunities.

The gap between management and the front line staff, in relation to making financial decisions has to be much more open, transparent and collaborative. Currently, management make too many of the decisions, without the background knowledge of the effects on those receiving the care.

More effective responses from staff in relation to care provision have to be in place to improve the abilities of social work services to prevent crisis and intervene early. For social services to best react to the needs of users, firstly, joined up working relationships need to become more cemented in trust and respect. Secondly, for a quality service that provides for the needs of users, the necessary members of staff within a diversity of professions and job roles have to be employed to respond in the most effective manner. This can be encouraged through better development of the skills mix and the roles involved within social care sector. This could be achieved by better use of administrative staff and other kinds of support workers. Not all social care is required to be undertaken by a trained social worker.

A multi disciplinary approach to assessing and planning could be adopted to better develop an understanding of the needs of individuals. By more effective measures of assessment and collective planning, prevention and early intervention becomes more achievable.

More effective targeting of specialist and generalist teams through getting the right kind of staff in place to help particular clients, while ensuring continuity of relationships. Amongst these staff, there also has to be good interaction to achieve high levels of quality care provision.

7.4 Measuring or evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention:

Measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention, regularly, the consideration of the potential benefits and cost effectiveness are raised. It is believed by intervening earlier to help solve clients' issues that the cost per client will significantly reduce. The cost to provide care for a crisis requires much more in the way of resources.

Early intervention would also be seen as an effective measure if it did in fact promote independence

Need supportive supervision in place to ensure early intervention....

8. Professional Accountability

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

Social workers and many other professions have to assess risk with all their clients at a variety of stages.. However, participants highlighted that frequently social workers as well as other professionals don't want to take on the responsibility of actually managing risk. They recognised that to do so can create a sense of isolation, there is a lack of support and high levels of stress for social workers.

8.4 Promoting and developing greater openness to learn from mistakes:

A blame culture currently hinders social workers' ability to work effectively according to respondents. Social workers constantly have to 'cover their back' and watch out for trouble and problems that could place them in difficult situations and subject to reprimand. Regular vilification of social workers occurs in the media and often they are seen to be at the root of problems and mistakes within social work and the wider social care sector .

Social workers do not want to have their responsibilities and autonomy to make professional judgements reduced. Instead, while recognising that social workers are individually responsible and accountable for their actions, managerial support and protection has to be given when problems arise. There needs to be recognition that individual social workers are not the root of the problem unless they have been deliberately irresponsible.

Learning from mistakes, rather than blaming individuals for them has to be an important cultural step change within social work services. By sharing mistakes just as much can be learned as through sharing good practice. Forums and other methods should be innovatively used to disseminate learning from mistakes.

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

Social workers want to be able to work independently and use their skills and knowledge to provide the best service to users. They regularly manage risk well and should be empowered to make the decisions they see as being most appropriate. Participants felt good supervision and support was imperative and had to accompany this autonomy. Having this foundation of supervision would allow prevention of problems and bad practices, therefore improving accountability and developing safer management of risk.

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:

Currently, many participants felt that the statutory sector was far too dominant and inward looking in terms of the provision of social work services. Participants

were keen to see further involvement of the voluntary and private sector into the future and looked for growth within these sectors over the next few decades. They were particularly keen to see a, 'mixing up' of the services where the different sectors were much more co operative, inter related and sharing. Participants felt the statutory services could really gain from working and relying upon independent organisations. They should be encouraged to collectively plan for service need as well as joint budgeting. It is not only within provision of services and strategic planning that collaborative working can take place but respondents also saw benefits in the voluntary and private sector being involved in policy development.

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

Considering staff employed within the different sectors, currently participants felt that there are similar roles with different accountabilities. These different accountabilities were not necessarily requiring to be homogenised, but more clarity in job roles and better understanding amongst both users and other staff had to be established as to what particular professionals do.

Reducing the target based culture, make measurements of progress or success based upon outcomes.

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

There are a variety of ways in which greater interchange can be promoted between the sectors.

There can be interchange of ideas where information needs to be open, transparent, and concise for all those who would need the shared knowledge. Everyone should be able to be involved and be fully aware of the issues in relation to the particularities of each individual they have in common in terms of their collective practice.

There needs to be more discursive, information sharing relationships between the different branches of social work. There has to be a more detailed understanding of what is happening 'on the ground', amongst management and amongst front line social workers there has to be a clearer understanding of the aims and objectives of management.

Training has to be embraced and participants were in favour of joint training programmes. Student placements should be in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. There should be an encouragement of 'practice learning networks' and training programmes need to be far more flexible.

There could also be promotion of further interchange of resources with shared budgets that are planned over longer periods of time. Longer term planning and funding was seen as key to being able to build long term relationships, with trust and harmony, amongst the different sectors.

Interchange between the sectors can be promoted through a variety of means, such as forums, news letters, email communication, video conferencing. Many respondents found it was not overly complex to share information and there is no requirement to always have very formal networks, but social work staff within different sectors need to be encouraged to be far more creative with their networking and interactive skills.

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

Participants were keen to see more responsibility and higher levels of accountability for projects within the voluntary sector. They felt responsibility and accountability had to be explicit in all partnerships to ensure that contributors gave a sufficient agreed amount of time, resources and staff to the contracted tasks, then everyone involved understands each others contributing role. Service level agreements were seen as key to the success of uniting everyone within a complete care package for service users. Introducing integration managers, to control and ensure all contributing sectors play their part, would be useful for the smooth running and effective delivery of services. Initially however, everyone involved within a service agreement must work within similar terms with common understandings. There has to be common aims and understanding, shared ideals and beliefs, a common framework in which partnerships must work in relation to clients and resources.

9.5 Good partnerships between the sectors that enable quality provision and what inhibits this:

Good partnerships are ones built on strong, long term, respectful relationships. Good partnerships also exchange ideas and examples of good practice. The more collaborative a set of partners become, the better the service they deliver.

We need to embed a sharing, collaborative culture

Lack of trust, suspicion of other agencies, poor track records and bad past experiences within different sectors inhibit progress towards good partnerships. Plans need to be well established and understood before agreements are finalised. Strategy has to be completely sound.

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

10.1 Defining what is a social worker:

Participants found it very difficult due to the rather 'woolly' 'unclear' nature of the social worker role and remit to define clearly, 'what is a social worker'. They recognised the position to have multiple skills and abilities as well as a great diversity of different responsibilities to clients.

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

To make best use of the skills and qualities of social workers, tasks need to be delegated in relation to client care to the most appropriate professional or

member of staff. Not only does this process of delegation have to take place within social work services, giving tasks out to a diversity of administrative staff, para-professionals and support workers, but, delegation has to occur amongst professionals from different backgrounds and other care sectors such as health, education and housing.

By delegating more effectively, social workers can spend the time on the tasks for which they are most suited.

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

Respondents saw value in having a generic basis to the social worker role with a set of shared values and agreed practices, particularly in the face of growing specialisation. However, specialists' knowledge and skills were found to be important to client care. Specific client problems need to be addressed by social workers with the necessary experience and knowledge. Often, a generic social worker would not be able to provide the high quality of service that a specialist could offer. A good balance has to be struck to keep the consistency of the social worker role, while providing avenues for specialisation.

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

Social workers need to have more time to work directly with clients. They have to be able to give the time to listen to their client's issues. A social worker can benefit from understanding the clients specific circumstances and unique problems and more specifically tailor interventions to these.

By developing high quality therapeutic relationships, confidence can be boosted for the users in terms of both who is providing the service, as well as confidence in the service itself.

Respondents felt strongly that building therapeutic relationships was core to what they, at least, wanted social workers to be. However, current circumstances prohibit their ability to provide this quality of care.

What Needs to Happen in Order to Deliver Your Vision

National

Strong leadership and effective management from the Scottish Executive-

To be effective leaders of social work services, participants felt the executive had to involve the 'real people' on the ground, who are directly involved as either front line staff or users themselves. It is the social workers and users of the service that have to be at the root of changes to social policy objectives and their views and interests have to be accounted for. Making relationships between the top and the bottom of organisations is core to this change. Managers can be high up but they also have to hold onto the strings at the bottom. Joined up relationships must be in place within the top ranks itself, and between the top and the bottom tiers.

Departments within the executive need to work together ensuring policy formulated, is not counter productive or contradictory to the work of other groups. Some kind of regulating body that fine combs policy was not considered viable. More joined up working and recognition of the work of other related groups has to infiltrate thinking.

Recognition of uniquely rural problems and ensure policy and resource allocation is geographically sensitive and aware. One size does not fit all-

Many participants came from a variety of different locations across the north of Scotland. The Inverness event in particular, had one of the largest proportions of rural participants of all the open events. Policy and resources have to be sensitive to rural conditions. Recognition is needed about how spatial difficulties affect social work services ability to fulfil policy aims and objectives, as well as how they have to overcome particular spatial barriers for the actual delivery of services.

Much longer term focus in terms of policy and financial allocation-

Both policies formulated and financial allocations made, have to be much more focused on the longer term. The executive must stop producing short term initiatives and criteria and apply trust to providers of care in relation to financial allocation. This would lead to more effective results within care services, as well as improved planning of services.

Improve pay and reward-

Invest in the work force. Have a pay and reward system that recognises the hard work of all care staff within social work services. This will importantly encourage positive attitudes to the social services as a career and properly recognise the contribution of social workers and other care staff.

Introduce more and better training-

There has to be a much stronger academic base to the profession rooted in a deep, continuous learning culture. There is wide general support for the honours degree in social work, and it was particularly valued for its high quality in relation to practice, learning and development. Social work education had to build from this and make more training opportunities available to current staff through post graduate qualification options.

Education should also be more responsive by providing shorter term courses, part time options and more flexibility with the types of qualifications that are required..

Many participants advocated for the development of practice based research. Have to encourage more support structures for partnerships between academic and practicing social workers. Evidence based research is seen as highly desirable and important for providing effective services.

Need to develop a strong professional identity that is common nationally-

Social work and social workers need strong definition in terms of what they can do and what their remit is. Currently, the nature of the job is rather 'woolly'. As a result, there is a lot of confusion surrounding job roles.

Particular criticism was raised in relation to the statutory sector. Participants regularly felt they underestimate and devalue workers within the voluntary sector. Proper recognition of professionalism has to be given to all qualified workers, what ever role they play within service provision.

Champion examples of good practice across the country-

A higher profile has to be built around social workers with better recognition of the unique skills and abilities they offer. Examples of good practice have to be identified and shown off. This allows social work staff to learn from others and encourages cooperation and collective thinking amongst members of staff, other authorities and sectors of social work services. Not only this, social workers can then learn and develop their approaches to practice.

Less bureaucracy demands should be made from national government-

Standardise administrative processes and regulate this throughout the country. This standardisation has to produce paperwork that is highly relevant, and beneficial to clients while not being repetitive and too demanding for social workers.

Changing society's expectations-

Respondents raised the issue that some how expectations and demands of society had to be reduced in relation to their responsibilities as citizens to care for family members. There needs to be encouragement of responsibilities as well

as rights. Empowerment and encouragement of service users has to become a main principle behind the provision of services.

Examine the social system and wider poverty issues and see how these produce deprivation-

One respondent felt most service users who require social work support have problems that stem from circumstances of poverty and deprivation. Instead of looking to social work to solve the problem, addressing wider issues of exclusion would be more advantageous.

Local

There has to be more localised control over the service provision-

Local authorities need to be allowed to allocate resources and operate in particular ways that are specific to needs in their areas.. There is demand for more autonomy and empowerment of local decision making that doesn't have to be based on national requirements.

Local authorities have to support and protect social workers while allowing them some level of professional autonomy-

Local authorities have to support individual social workers much more than they currently do. The social worker reacts defensively and is regularly the source of blame when problems occur concerning service provision. While social workers want to work with levels of professional autonomy and use their skills and experience, they want to feel supported in the decisions they make. Decision making processes need to become more open and transparent as well as more prepared for challenge and closer scrutiny.

Localised joint working must be effective-

Real joined up working has to be encouraged. Not only within social work itself but also with other services such as health, education and housing that contribute different kinds of service provision for users of social work services.

In terms of joint working the growth of the voluntary and private services should be encouraged.

Develop the 'one stop shop' concept where services can be delivered within a localised area.

Outsourcing

There has to be continued recognition of the blurred nature of the boundaries between the professions. Encourage the sharing out of tasks in relation to client care, with the purpose of finding the most suitable and best trained professional to undertake a particular task.

Mechanisms for sharing have to be put in place that are both formal and informal. Popular examples are local forums. It was important to stress that consultation and interaction with other service providers did not always have to be face to face, one on one. Much more creative ways of keeping local networks in touch with each other should be developed.

Integration managers have to be employed to oversee joint working and ensure all partners are standing by their commitments and responsibilities as set out in working agreements.

Community planning: information needs to be made more available and related to the localised communities that social work services cover. Care has to be far more tailored to the interests and circumstances of a local place, local conditions and the populations within these places.

Devolved budgets

Rural issues of localised conditions-

Area based, specific and unique, service provision has to occur in relation to spatial differences. Services are much more difficult to access, harder to provide and give users less choice in rural locations. Geographical inequalities have to be looked at and problems of spatial variation in quality and choice of services have to be made more even.

Individual

Empowerment and decision making to the front line-

Decisions and care plans need to be organised by those who are closely involved with the clients care process. Resource allocation has to be seriously considered rather than management led. The background and understanding of clients' needs should be more closely related to the care they receive within social work services. This allows for more tailored action to be taken in relation to users and can encourage prevention. Good levels of supervision however must accompany this freedom to make decisions. This will help provide more personalised services that really fit the needs of the user. However, there has to be understanding of the limitations of what services can offer.

Individual support and guidance to social workers-

There has to be less of a blame culture. Decisions made and actions taken by autonomous social workers have to be supported by management. There has to be good consultation and shared understanding and aims within the different tiers of social work management, with more clarity and openness.

More choice for users to tailor their needs within a network of multiple services-

Where possible, service users should be given more choice. Individual clients have to be recognised as a knowledgeable contributor to care planning and their views and interests must be more engaged with and acknowledged by

professional staff. This can be done through building better relationships between users and providers and taking the time to listen and exchange information and opinions. Opportunities need to be made for service users to make their views heard and understood by decision makers.

Ease of engaging information and other professionals for social work staff-

There have been many comments surrounding a complete change in the culture of social work, in relation to becoming more communicative and sharing. There are many ways national and local bodies can influence this process but for real change to occur it has to be relevant to workers on the ground and they have to embrace this new culture to ensure it can develop.

Individual social workers need to be able to access information for themselves with ease and co operation.

Give social workers the time to do preventative work, time for direct patient time, time for reflection and self management-

Currently there is seen to be too much pressure on social workers' time. There were heavy complaints surrounding the systems and processes social workers had to use, and it is believed not enough time is spent on the real benefit of direct client care, space for reflection and case consideration, as well as possibly other areas such as career development and effective communication and networking with other professions and organisations. Certain tasks that social workers do are valued or deprecated over others when they should not necessarily be so. Self management for social workers is important.

Give social workers the chance to say 'no' cannot do everything and should not be expected to do so-

There needs to be acceptance that social workers have scarce amounts of time and resources. Social workers work within a culture of 'doing good' and they need to be encouraged and allowed to say no to unreasonable workloads without persecution. This would then reduce stress levels allowing social workers the ability to better manage their time and provide a higher quality service to their users as a result.

More para-professionals and support staff to support the individual social worker-

Support networks of different kinds of staff have to be created around the social worker. Social workers have to actively encourage all staff to feel like their opinions and contributions are relevant And make informed decisions based on a collective understanding of the issues. The roles that were particularly popular amongst the participants were assistant social work staff, clerical workers and financial/ business management staff.

Need to develop people's resilience and independence at the core of the social worker remit-

Enabling clients to take on more responsibility for themselves within a controlled caring environment develops resilience, independence and autonomy for the individual involved. By encouraging responsibility in people they can work themselves out of their problems and are more likely to be less reliant on social work services both in the short and longer term.

Talk to the Wall comments

Participants were also given the chance to contribute further during the event by making points on a wall chart in relation to the six key themes of the review. These comments are listed within this appendix.

Service organisation and delivery

- Services centred around individual need rather than 'what is available'
- Better briefing and training prior to service delivery
- Regularity builds trust with clients
- Flexible service- clients needs are not centred around the hrs of 7:30am to 10:00pm
- Communication 'sales and operations'
- Delivery not as promised

Roles of the social worker

- Be happy
- Be positive and more 'out of the box' thinking of service delivery

Performance improvement

- Careers need to be sensitive to clients needs and feelings

Legislation

No comment

Confident competent workforce

- Staff do not have necessary training/ support to deal with difficult clients

Leadership and Management-

- Lack of training and sharing of information prior to client delivery- 'affects quality of service- poor'
- Carers not motivated to provide quality of service expected
- Management structure does not allow for fault rectification
- Change culture open doors 'policy'!!
 - Open email
 - Open post
 - Open ear

Elizabeth Bulmer
Research Assistant for the 21st Century Social Work Review
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