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Report on Analysis of Responses to the Second  
Call for Contributions

August 2005

Summary of Main Findings

## Introduction

In July 2005 the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Work Review launched a second call for contributions. The purpose of this was to draw further evidence from the opinions surrounding the future delivery of social work services. More specifically it considered the following:

- The planning and delivery of services,
- The increasing need for services,
- The management of services; and
- how technology could be used by the sector more effectively and innovatively

The call also gave respondents the opportunity to make more general comments about how improvements could be made to the services. This paper contains the findings of the initial analysis of the responses.

### *The planning and delivery of services*

#### Key points:

- Increased strategic planning by Local Authorities and the voluntary sector.
- Improved commissioning process.
- Scottish Executive to address guidance and engagement processes.
- Funding to be guided by principles of quality not just value for money.
- More effective ring fenced funding to ensure it reaches the intended targets.
- More recognition of the role of the informal sector e.g. self help groups community groups, volunteers, extended families.

#### Increased need for services

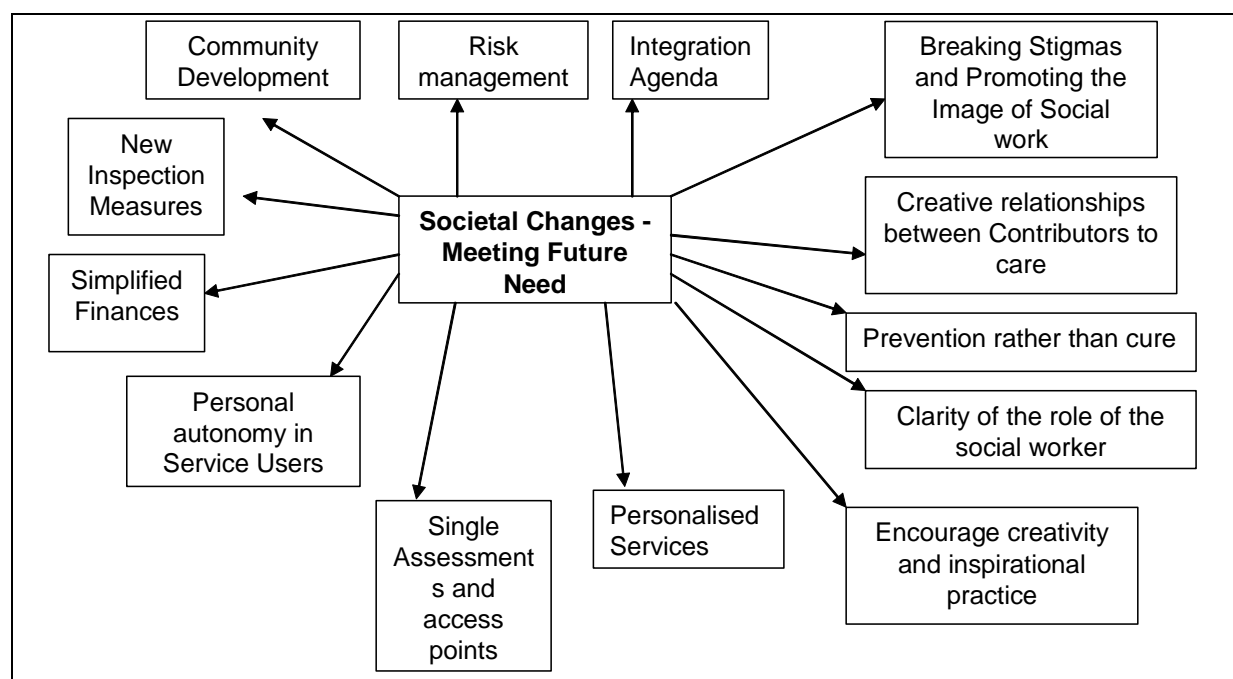
Social work has to become far more responsive and aware of changing societal conditions in order to be responsive to future social care needs. Respondents gave examples of societal changes that they anticipated as well as the main changes and those are illustrated in diagram 1

### *Meeting the needs for social care services in the next 20 years and beyond using social work services, other public services, individuals and communities*

There was a variety of predicted societal changes mentioned by participants. Responses varied from a growing elderly population, increasing numbers of drug and alcohol abusers, a diverse ethnic, cultural and religious make up to larger proportions of people with disability, sensory impairment, mental illness and learning difficulties. Other participants highlighted growing demands and requirements of services; increasing rates of dependency in a society with widening inequalities; and higher levels of social exclusion.

The responses suggested that social work services have to be more responsive and adaptable to changing societal conditions in order to be sufficiently responsive to future social change. Participants gave examples of changes that need to be made in relation to these societal changes, which are depicted in diagram 1 below.

## *Societal Changes - Meeting Future Need [diagram 1]*



### *The balance between an individual's right to social care services and their own or their family responsibility for care*

Most responses centred on balancing the relationship between the individual, the family and the state.

#### ***The Individual***

- Make clients less dependant upon social workers and the services they receive.
- Empowering and encouraging clients to become self reliant. They have to take control of their own issues, think for themselves, and be active participants in meeting their own needs.
- While encouraging individualism - insuring correct levels of support and protection where appropriate for clients.

#### ***The Family***

- Continued increasing demand on the family in terms of responsibility for care of relatives.
- The issue of whether care is a family obligation.
- Issues around approaching problems associated with disinterest in caring for family members.
- Recognition of the value families add to care and the benefits they make to support the work of social services.
- Support and advice for carers has to improve and social work has to engage with carers.

#### ***The State***

- Resources are limited.

- Needs to be far more creative in its approach to care e.g. preventative rather than reactive, less crisis focused, more personalised services provided, effective engagement and close relationships between professionals and service users.
- Consider the changes within health services, pensions and accommodation as well as community care. Ensure social work services function in relation to them.

The relationship between the individual, the family and the state is unique to every client. There is no singular model that could be produced to establish when it is the responsibility of social work to care for an individual. Whatever the relationship, clients should always receive adequate levels of care and assistance. There have to be effective relationships and partnerships built between these different contributors to care through increased levels of consultation and engagement. Social work services need to be creative and recognise that there is a diversity of care options that can be produced within the triangulation between the individual, the family and the state. Social work should act to enable and support effective partnerships between the various involved parties in client care.

### *Managing demands for services*

Key points:

- Resource allocation needs to be as transparent as possible e.g. clear eligibility criteria.
- There was a range of views surrounding whether Social Workers (SWs) should act as gatekeepers. Notably, the voluntary sector responses revealed a tendency to be less comfortable with this role, stating that SWs should work more as 'enablers' and 'facilitators of support'. The LA submissions stressed the finite nature of resources and how this made SWs acting as gatekeepers 'unavoidable'. Whether SWs should or should not be acting as gatekeepers, there was a consensus that despite these roles SWs should practice in a non-discriminatory way led by the needs of the service user.
- An increased emphasis on co-production between SWs and service users in designing care plans is needed.
- There may be a need/role for the increased use of advocacy in order to create fair access to services.
- More clarity is needed about what Social Work departments should provide and fund themselves, and who will meet other needs.
- More creative use of resources is needed e.g. the development of one stop shops.
- Funding arrangements need to be less rigid and more responsive, allowing for flexibility in deployment.
- A person centred approach should be central to effective management of demands of services.
- Need to invest in good, well paid administration staff to support front line staff.

### *Use of Technology*

The main points raised broke down into the following sections

#### *Increase in the service user's independence;*

- Those who are housebound can gain independence through technology such as SMART homes, and the use of the internet for communication and routine tasks such as shopping and banking.

- The ability to do self assessments and apply for certain services and equipment on-line, speed up access to payments and provide user guides to assist with form filling.

***Empower and inform service users:***

- Use of the internet for knowledge, awareness and availability of services.
- Using Video/DVD as information-givers.
- Assist young people with their educational careers.
- Telephone and email advice such as parentline and childline.

***Improved sharing of information:***

- This should include not only LAs but also the voluntary and private sectors.
- Better access to records and case notes etc. whilst mobile, without the need to return to the office.
- Computerisation of confidential client reports across LAs makes services more efficient.
- Better recording of events about a child, their needs and areas of difficulties. This can then be automatically transferred to others who may get involved in that child's care. Particularly important for looked after children who need accurate information as they grow in order to retain their birth family history and so that placements can be selected with greater attention to each child's history and heritage.
- Integrated care records.
- Collation of information and the sharing of it could be improved to assist with care planning.
- Shared systems and databases across organisations should be used for doing assessments and recording information.
- In health, there is a drive towards a single electronic patient record - this could be just one record to which all services contribute.

***Better mobility:***

- Remote emailing of social workers in rural areas so they can be where they are most needed.
- Use of reporting/tracking could be used for staff in lone working out of hours etc.
- Recording home visits.
- Meet the communication and protection needs of isolated social workers in rural areas.
- Reduce the need for large offices - have mobile staff using local resource bases utilising mobile technology.

***Other areas in which technology might be used:***

- Non intrusive monitoring of older people with dementia.
- Stock control of aids and equipment.
- E-procurement of goods and services and e-tendering for services.
- Use internet to keep abreast of practice/policy developments and research.
- Electronic surveys for feedback.
- Integration and streamlining of services, including budgets, inspection, monitoring and auditing.
- Reduce time spent on form filling.
- Technology can help release time for more direct work with users of services.

***Challenges & Concerns:***

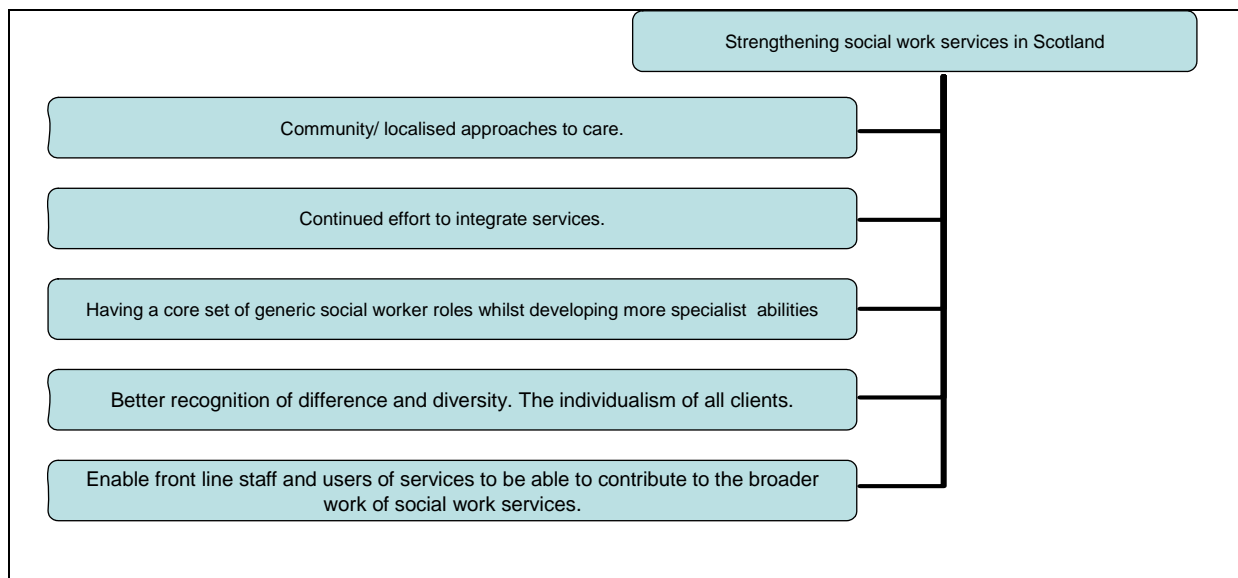
- Need adequate resources and training. Social care staff will need up-to-date knowledge and expertise.
- There must be a willingness to accept change.

- Need to avoid increased time spent on office based computer related work. The time freed up by technology must be used for direct work as technology is not a substitute for social care. People still need human contact and to be part of the community however good technology becomes. Services must be needs driven not driven by technology.
- Understand the dangers from the internet (chat rooms etc.) that face young people and train children/carers in the safe use of this technology.
- Need to provide people with easy access to information and good, well maintained websites as they become more computer literate.
- Developing web based directories and information resources.
- Need to respect that not all service users will be comfortable using new technologies.
- Need to become less risk averse in order to properly utilise technology.
- Specific social care skills are required in the area of telephone and email advice and should be recognised and developed.
- Concern for privacy and confidentiality.

### *What would strengthen social work services in Scotland?*

There was a good response to this question that produced a large variety of ways in which social work services in Scotland could be strengthened. The main themes raised are depicted in diagram 2.

*Strengthening Social Work Services in Scotland [diagram 2]*



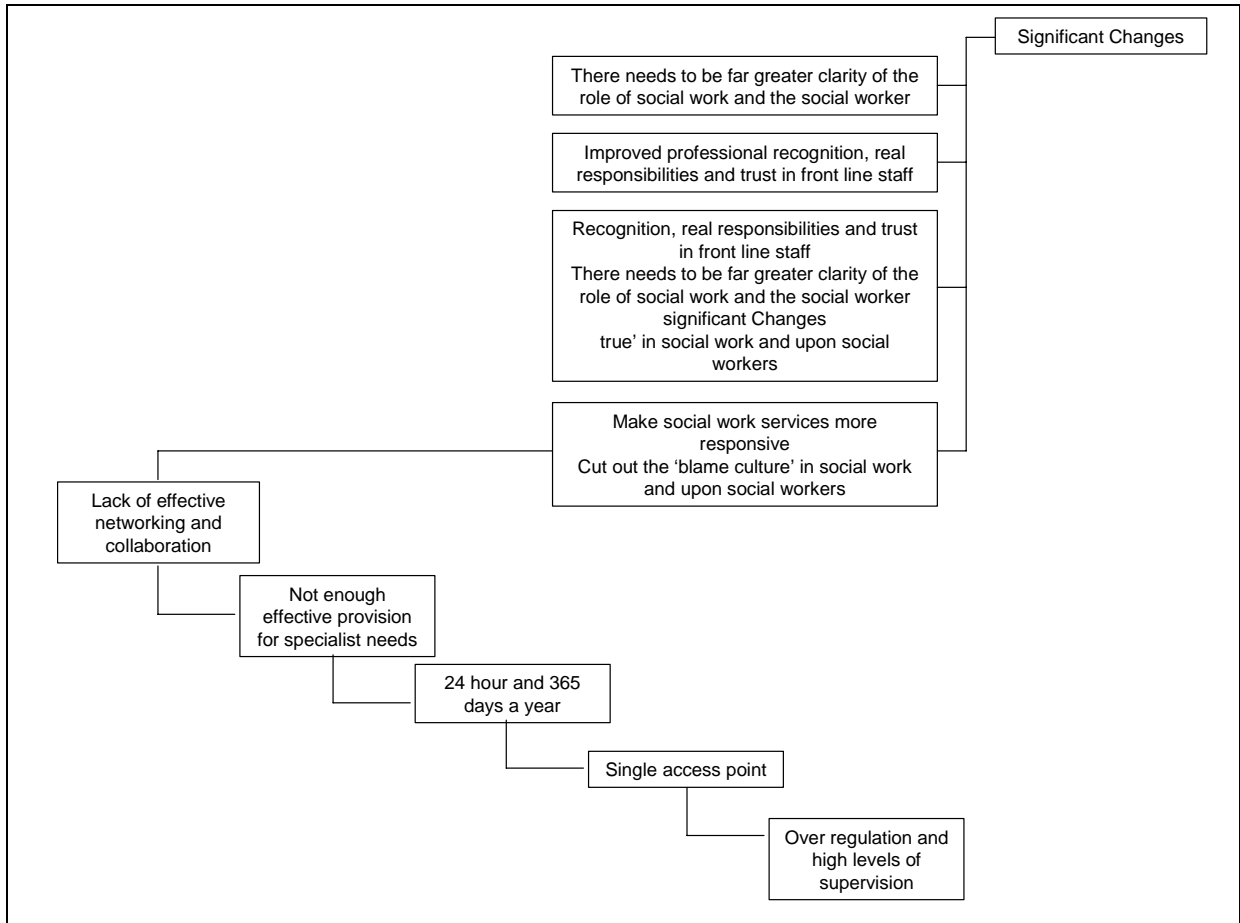
Other related examples that were less commonly stated by respondents were

- Better use of para professionals, administration and finance staff.
- A national framework for pay and reward.
- A review and consolidation of social work legislation.
- Better support for carers - less family burden when caring for family relatives.
- Encourage sharing examples of good and bad practice amongst the profession.
- Joined up thinking and improved leadership from the Scottish Executive.

**What needs to be significantly changed?**

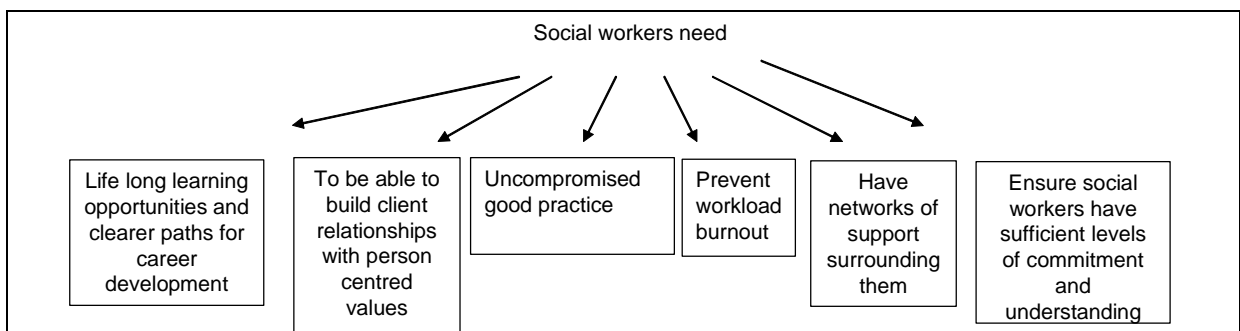
The main themes that arose in relation to what needs to be significantly changed are highlighted in diagram 3.

*Significant Changes that should be made to Improve Social Work Services [diagram 3]*



Many respondents also made reference to changes that could be made more directly in relation to social workers themselves. These are depicted in diagram 4.

*Significant Changes that can should be made in relation to Social Workers [diagram 4]*

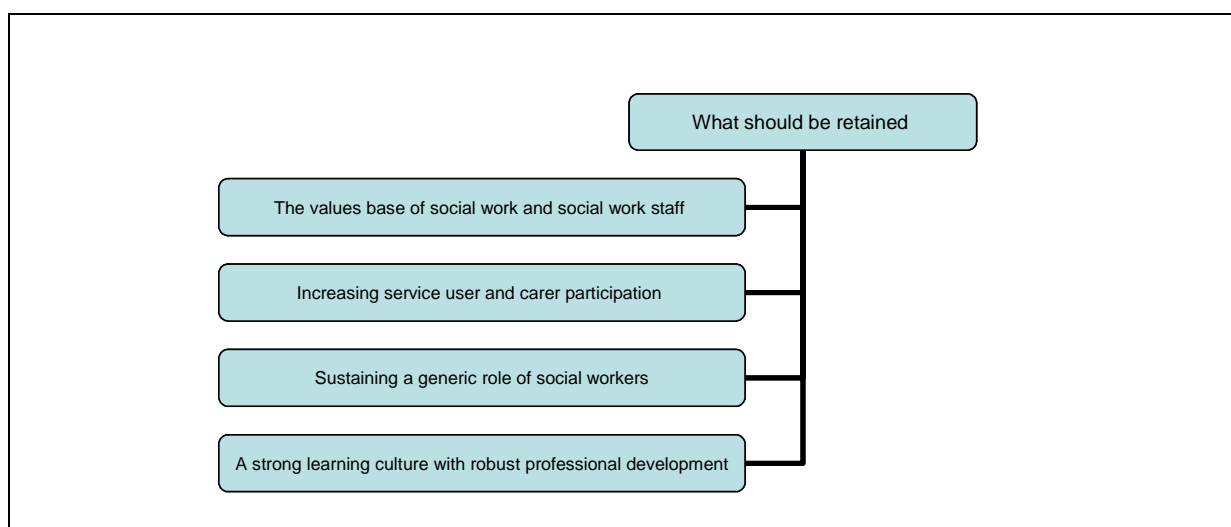


Other issues raised were the need for a stronger role for the service user and carer. Also, particularly from respondents from the voluntary sector, there was demand for improved recognition and appreciation of their particular contribution to social work provision.

### *What needs to be retained and built upon?*

The main themes that were raised in relation to what should be retained and built upon are expressed in diagram 5.

### *What should be retained [diagram 5]*



Other examples raised that were less common amongst respondents were:

- Continued encouragement of the recruitment of individuals from diverse backgrounds i.e. ethnic minorities
- Retain local government with the key strategic and leadership role whilst allowing decisions surrounding planning, commissioning and delivery of services to be made at a more localised level.
- Continue to develop leadership capacity within the workforce. Must ensure high quality professional leadership for the future.

# **Main Report of the Analysis of responses to the second call for contributions**

This analysis considers the responses made in relation to the set questions:

## **1. PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

Social work services are increasingly delivered through a mixed economy involving local authorities, voluntary and private organisations.

1.1 How can each of these best contribute to the strategic planning, commissioning, purchasing and providing of services?

## **2. INCREASING NEED FOR SERVICES**

More people are going to need social care services over the next 20 years. Meeting this increased need might involve working in different ways e.g. intervening at an earlier stage, different public services working together in new ways. It may also mean individuals and communities meeting aspects of their own social care needs

2.1 What could social work services, other public services, individuals and communities do differently which could help to meet the need for social care services in the next 20 years and beyond?

2.2 What changes, if any, are needed in the balance between an individual's rights to social care services and their own or their family's responsibility for care?

## **3. MANAGING DEMANDS FOR SERVICES**

Part of a social worker's job can be deciding the services a person can or cannot get.

3.1 How can access to social work services be managed fairly? What is the role of the social worker and other public service workers in this?

## **4. USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Improvements in technology may help in the delivery of social care services in future. This could be equipment to help people to meet their own needs e.g. adapting the homes of disabled people. It could also help in the organisation of social care services through improved communications etc.

4.1 How might technology be of help to people in meeting their social care needs?

4.2 How could technology be used in the organisation of social care services?

## **5. ANY OTHER ISSUES**

How can we improve social work services for the future?

5.1 What three things do you think would strengthen social work services in Scotland?

5.2 What three things do you think need to be significantly changed and why?

5.3 What three things do you think should be retained and built upon and why?

The analysis draws on responses from a variety of different respondents from different backgrounds with multiple relationships to social work services. All responses across the board have been analysed here. Some responses dealt with only one or a few of the questions.

## Analysis of responses

### Planning and Delivery of Services

#### *How LAs, voluntary and private organisations can best contribute to the strategic planning, commissioning, purchasing and providing of services*

The analysis has broken down the responses into those from LAs, voluntary organisations, health, a service user, individual social work consultants and social work institutions.

#### *LA responses*

Responses from North Ayrshire Council Social Services, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council.

The LA respondents felt that they should maintain their statutory responsibility for the strategic planning of social services. This was not to exclude voluntary and private sectors in planning; which are seen to *"contribute to a local authority's understanding of the needs within their area and play a role in planning the range of social services that meet the needs of the community"*<sup>1</sup>. The roles of LAs, the voluntary and private sectors in strategic planning were seen to be complementary and a need for increased partnership working at the strategic level was identified. Furthermore, in terms of partnership working, there needs to be easier access to services through one point of entry e.g. to LA services via key voluntary agencies and a centrally co-ordinated database of all services.

Aberdeen City identified the following stages that are needed in planning:

- Identification of the key stakeholders.
- Clarification of how the stakeholders are to be involved.
- Establish structures and processes to achieve stakeholder involvement.
- Establish a commitment to shared goals.
- Establish agreement on the means by which goals are to be achieved (requiring greater budget co-ordination; particularly between health and LA budgets).
- Develop better information systems to enable effective planning.

In terms of commissioning, it was felt that LAs should retain overall responsibility for the commissioning of services along with other key statutory organisations such as the NHS. This was based on the perception that neither the private nor the voluntary sector is better placed to understand the full complexity of need within a local area.

It was reported that LAs need to make their commissioning strategies explicit in terms of services required and budgets available to allow the independent sector to respond more strategically. The voluntary sector needs to understand that *"local authority commissioning and purchasing processes are necessary to ensure the 'public pound' is accounted for"*<sup>2</sup>. This understanding should be linked with LAs to ensure that commissioning and purchasing processes are not unnecessarily bureaucratic and to avoid

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<sup>1</sup> North Ayrshire Council Social Services, Response to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Review Group Call for Contributions on the Future Organisation and Delivery of Social Care Services, July 2005, p2

<sup>2</sup> Aberdeenshire Council, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social work Review- Second Call for Contributions: Delivery of Services, p1

disabling imaginative and effective voluntary sector service delivery. It was also noted that LAs need to re-organise structures and staffing resources to recognise the shift from in-house provision to purchasers of services.

One of the LA submissions noted that clear guidance on purchasing and service provision legal/contractual requirements would be welcome as currently the 32 LAs are prone to differing interpretations of responsibilities. These inconsistent interpretations could lead to unhelpful conflict between LAs and voluntary/private sector providers.

It was felt crucial that LAs retain the ability to provide services as well as commissioning them. This is advantageous because direct provision could provide a benchmark for quality of practice, and it is the only way of preventing 'cherry picking' of clients, ensuring that people with more challenging behaviours received services.

It was generally felt that all organisations need to ensure that service delivery is truly focused on service users and that *"LAs and voluntary/private sector organisations must be prepared to start from this user-focused baseline in order to contribute effectively to the strategic planning, commissioning, purchasing and provision of services"*<sup>3</sup>.

Voluntary sector expertise was recognised, particularly in regards to highly specialised services. It was felt that central to any debate of an enhanced role for the voluntary sector would be whether the services it provides deliver better outcomes for the individuals and communities concerned.

### ***Voluntary sector responses***

Responses from The Forum of Providers of Social Work Services to Deaf People, ENABLE Scotland, The Action Group, Community Care Providers Scotland, Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit, Alzheimer Scotland, Children 1<sup>st</sup>, The Fostering Network, Autism in Scotland, Quarriers, Aberlour.

Most of the responses began by noting that the mixed economy of care had resulted in richer, more diverse services. There were however a significant number of perceived problems.

The general feeling was that the voluntary sector and the people they represented need to be much more engaged in strategic planning processes at the earliest stages. Strategic planning, purchasing and commissioning of social care need the expertise of front line service providers, especially specialist service provider's e.g. family placement workers. Overall there was a strong consensus from the voluntary responses that its wealth of expertise and experience was not being utilised in strategic planning processes e.g. in areas such as residential child care, community care, mental health, learning disability and care of older adults.

The voluntary sector's involvement in planning and delivering services was viewed by some as being limited to service provision. This perceived lack of involvement in partnerships was seen to limit the overall creativity and innovation of local authority services. This issue was felt to be particularly pertinent to smaller organisations whose strengths do not lie in tendering and selling themselves, yet whose services are specific and valuable. Ways of helping such smaller agencies need to be found through more collaborative working with other providers. One method suggested was through the creation of consortia of agencies large and small to plan and deliver services.

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<sup>3</sup> Aberdeen City Council, Response to 2<sup>nd</sup> call for contributions, p1

Many of the voluntary organisations stated that partnerships need to be based on mutual trust and reciprocity, equality of power in decision-making, shared accountability and responsibility. Some current commissioning arrangements were viewed as having conditions dictated by LAs with their statutory power being used to justify unreasonable and inequitable specifications.

Commissioning processes were seen as currently ineffective and purely cost based which acted to crush *“the potential vibrancy, dynamism and creativity that could exist within externally or newly commissioned services”*<sup>4</sup>. One submission noted that LA commissioning processes were merely adopted from traditional building and land services approaches. This was seen to result in unreasonable levels of complexity for very small amounts of service e.g. small advocacy tenders requiring the same degree and level of response as an extensive supported living contract.

Many of the voluntary organisation responses noted concerns with LAs acting as both providers and purchasers. It was recognised that regulatory standards need to be met in all services but it was felt that *“current funding patterns do not support this as full costs are available to the statutory sector but are not usually passed on to the voluntary sector”*<sup>5</sup>. Full cost recovery is needed as currently voluntary organisations have to underpin shortfalls in funding for statutory functions through their charitable funds, along while spending increasing time and energy on multiple funding applications which detracted from service delivery. The alternative of reducing the volume or quality of service was either not considered or explicitly ruled out by LAs.

A further problem noted in many of the responses were issues with new costs resulting from national policy and legislation e.g. Care Commission fees, SSSC related training costs, NI increases etc. There was felt to be an expectation that these would be met from the provider’s management charge or from the voluntary organisations own resources. CCPS identified this as being the result of a problematic issue in the current system: policy, targets and standards are set nationally whilst funding is distributed locally. As a result, voluntary organisations are caught in a gap between national policy and LA local implementation.

One organisation suggested that if LAs were to continue as both purchaser and provider, a way forward could be to separate those services currently provided by LAs from the LA itself, thus establishing them as an independent providing company open to market forces. The establishment of an independent National Planning, Commissioning and Purchasing body with the power to enforce fair and equal competition across the social care sector could potentially improve this further.

One of the responses noted that with creation of the Scottish Parliament brought a new political framework for formulating new policies. These new policies were seen as depending on traditional LA structures to ensure that policy funds are deployed to the intended recipients. This was viewed as being unsuccessful. It was felt that further exploration is needed into different mechanisms by which the SE could engage more actively, directly and effectively with voluntary organisations.

CCPS noted that there were no mechanisms to estimate future social care provision in the voluntary sector. Consequently LAs were unable to properly predict such costs, resulting in

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<sup>4</sup> ENABLE Scotland Response, p1

<sup>5</sup> Aberlour Response to second call for contributions, p2

the spending requirements of LAs (which are discussed with the SE) not being fully informed of voluntary sector costs.

The CCPS noted that as employer members of the SJC, LAs must meet their obligations to provide nationally agreed pay and conditions packages to staff; however they are under no similar obligation in relation to purchased services. This resulted in the voluntary sector experiencing problems in recruiting and retaining staff since they were unable to offer equivalent packages. This was seen to place more innovative services at risk. In addition, where providers competed primarily on cost this acted to drive down staff pay and conditions and, again, could affect service quality over time.

CCPS further state that current systems of planning and funding do not allow for strategic discussion over longer term improvements in the terms and conditions of the voluntary sector social care workforce. Such discussions need to be on a national basis and be accorded the same status of major reviews for other groups of workers, such as health service staff and teachers.

CCPS concluded that overall resources for services need to be distributed equitably between the public, voluntary and private sectors without structural advantage or disadvantage built into any one sector. The funding system needs to be redesigned to prioritise quality, not cost. The current market was perceived as almost entirely driven by cost considerations as there is no market incentive to improve quality.

One organisation pointed the Review Group to the Department of Health publication, *"Building Capacity and Partnership in Care. An agreement between the statutory and the independent social care, health care and housing sectors"*, October 2001

### *Health*

There was one response from the Centre for Change and Innovation. The main points were:

- Needs to be upfront agreement about who is best placed to lead and who to deliver.
- The potential of CHP's e.g. will they help to streamline the way that services are commissioned and delivered?
- Voluntary/private organisations could contribute to service provision by delivering services that do not require a qualified social worker e.g. organising transport and providing group sessions for people with the same problem/s.
- Social workers need to understand their role in the context of the whole system.
- Focus on delivering care where it is most beneficial to the individual and their family. Hospitals are not safe or appropriate environments for people to wait for social care.

### *Service User*

There was one response from a service user. The main points were:

- Communication is key to all parties contributing effectively.
- Boundaries of services creates confusion e.g. service user lived in Bo' ness, had a West Lothian phone number and post code yet fell under Falkirk LA.
- Ring fenced monies need to be more effectively allocated in order to reach the set target.

### *Independent Social Work consultants*

There was one joint contribution from three independent consultants. The main points were:

- LA commissioning role viewed as likely to increase. Consideration is needed as to who is best qualified for this role in recognition of the argument that commissioning should be seen as a skilled remit in its own right.

- The role of the informal sector - which would include self-help groups, community groups, volunteers, and extended families - may become more important as a consequence of streamlining of services. The Review needs to recognise this possibility in its twenty year vision.

### *Social Work Institutions*

Contributions from BASW, SSSC and SIRCC. The main points were:

- More clarity is needed in how the total public purse is earmarked for social services is distributed.
- Quality as well as value for money principles are needed in the commissioning process.
- All costs need to be transparent so there is no unnecessary 'recycling of money' without direct benefit to the user of the services.
- SSSC supported a review of the planning and commissioning arrangements to consider how to develop partnerships that recognise the strengths and expertise which the voluntary sector brings to the table.

## Increasing Need for Services

### *Meeting the needs for social care services in the next 20 years and beyond using social work services, other public services, individuals and communities*

There were extensive contributions that aimed to predict likely societal changes over the next 20 years within social care services. One respondent particularly emphasised that social work services need to be far more aware of the changing dynamics of society and adapt accordingly, and strongly criticised social work services for not being as responsive to change as they could/should be. The societal changes that were identified were:

- Much greater proportion of elderly service users.
- Labour market implications of an increasingly elderly population.
- Increasing numbers of people who will be disabled, sensory impaired, suffering mental illness or having learning difficulties.
- Growing drug and alcohol abuse problem.
- Growing rates of dependency upon services.
- More demand for services to sustain people in their own homes.
- Widening inequalities resulting in higher levels of societal exclusion.
- Greater ethnic diversity within the population.
- Increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees.
- Diversifying family structures and weakening reliability of families as a support network to service users.
- Growing demands and increasing requirement of higher standards of care on social work services.

The most common predicted societal change raised by participants was the demographic issue of a growing elderly population, which one respondent called 'a demographic time bomb'. Another prevailing theme was the increasing growth in client diversity, which participants felt would be manifest in increasing complexity and individualised user problems, circumstances and unique personal qualities to consider.

Contributions also mentioned ways in which social work services, other public services, individuals and communities may have to react in terms of these forecasts.

### *Community development approach*

There was a consensus amongst the respondents in support of community development approaches. These were seen as the most successful context in which services could be organised and provided. One respondent supported local authority style control as opposed to a more centralised shared design. One respondent particularly mentioned the model of care that could be found in both Denmark and Finland. S/he considered these to be particularly good examples of effective community approaches in practice.

Amongst the respondents who mentioned community approaches most went on to highlight the potential benefits of such approaches. These centred on the importance of social work localised areas and their ability to create stronger, more confident, communities. Good neighbourhood schemes, localised approaches and community capacity were also recognised as strengthening local democracy and the capacity of communities to participate actively in determining the processes and outcomes of social and economic change.

### *Personalised services*

Many respondents highlighted that social work for the future has to continue to recognise the need for more specialised services. Social work and social work staff should continue to develop individualised responses with recognition that there is not a 'homogenous population' and that everyone has a unique set of complex needs. The diversity of issues that social workers have to consider can vary from disability, mental illness, domestic abuse, asylum issues to immigration. People can also be unique in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, and religious background/faith system. Respondents noted that mainstream services did not always provide the individualised services that were required. Social workers have to develop understandings of personal circumstances and be sensitive, well educated and flexible enough to provide a high quality of service to meet a wide diversity of client needs.

### *Personal Autonomy in Service Users*

A strong theme that extends throughout the majority of the contributions is the fundamental importance of social work's ability to empower service users. Social work strongly aims to promote social inclusion, maintain individual independence and encourage full participation in society for its users economically, socially and/or culturally.

Responses noted that currently social work provision makes users highly dependent, and many clients are recognised as living in isolation from their communities. Care that encapsulates the self help ethos, with a strong emphasis upon service user and carer involvement and reasonable, relevant, levels of social work intervention is highly desirable.

### *Creative relationships between contributors to care*

A large proportion of respondents felt it was essential that social work services engaged with the user themselves. It was recognised that regularly clients can self assess, distinguish their own need and constructively participate in the decisions made by social workers. This user involvement was viewed to produce better service results in terms of quality for the client and cost benefit to the service. However it was recognised that occasionally clients do not want to participate and sometimes are unable to actually establish what it is they need, requiring social workers to take professional decisions based on their experience, understanding and training.

Not only do relationships have to be built between service users and social work staff, but also between social work staff and carers, and the family members who are involved in

helping provide assistance to their relatives. Many respondents appreciated that family contributions can be key to the success of effective service for their clients.

Social workers must have the time and resources to facilitate sufficient levels of interaction amongst individuals and family members in order to fully develop a clear understanding of the possibilities that each contributor could make to client care. The better a social worker understands the dynamics between these people, the more creative and responsive the solution to care can be. Social workers will have a developed knowledge about the real levels of care that are required for their clients and how best to facilitate that care.

### *Encourage creativity and inspirational practice*

A few respondents mentioned the importance of innovation and creativity in developing social work services for the future.

The majority of these contributions felt social workers required sufficient levels of autonomy and professional responsibility, as well as flexibility in terms of time and financial resources to ensure this originality could be sufficiently facilitated.

A few respondents mentioned that some kind of forum or method of interaction amongst social workers, social work staff and other related professional could be developed. This would create a place for effective and ineffective practices to be exchanged allowing individual workers to constantly update their methods of practice.

Another response noted that the principles that are part of social work education should be more transferable to the working world.

### *Focus on prevention rather than cure*

A few respondents highlighted the worrying pattern of continued increasing demands and need placed upon social work services in the future. In response to this rising need, current practices are seen to be insufficient. There is much demand for a service that is focused upon preventative methods, as well as providing crisis care. Early intervention that is less reactionary tends to address client problems at an earlier stage rather than when the situation reaches crisis point. A common complaint is that due to the lack of time and resources, social work is only able to respond to the cases that are critical. One respondent highlighted that this is much more costly as well as intensive in terms of the support required. Clients regularly need to be in crisis or even orchestrate crisis in order to access a social worker.

### *Risk management*

Social workers are recognised as working in an environment that is extensively high risk, involving exceptionally vulnerable individuals with wide-ranging sets of problems. Many social workers are left feeling vulnerable to high levels of criticism and responsibility, particularly in relation to child/social work relationships.

There has to be a better support system for social workers, with sufficient levels of advice, protection and security given to the decisions they make. Responsibility has to be spread over the agency/authority for which they work. In addition, the individualised, highly critical blame culture should be eradicated. Social workers want to be able to have personal autonomy, the opportunity to try new approaches and to approach problems in their own individualised way. There has to be the understanding that social work cannot prevent all major problems and that sometimes problems will be irresolvable.

### ***Integration agenda***

The integration of services was a point consistently raised by almost all respondents. Some respondents noted the benefits that could be gained from integrating services out with social work e.g. the police force, health services, housing departments, and education providers.

There has to be established, agreed standards of care, common understandings and goals, and collective service agreements and understandings. The practicalities are recognised as difficult to overcome. Integrating separate sectors, authorities and agencies is seen as a difficult, complex task. However, professional groups cannot work in isolation of each other and have to be fully committed to further integration to the best of their abilities in their workplace.

### ***Financial Simplification***

Financial issues were of less concern to the respondents. However when raised, respondents felt it was important to have a far more simplistic financial set up, in relation to applications for funding, that reduces a great amount of red tape and difficulty in access. There are criticised for being over managed. There was also a strong sense of mistrust due to the high levels of accounting and justification required for all financial allocation, which is considered to make the system highly ineffective. There were also high levels of frustration noted over the short time scales of funding cycles.

### ***New inspection measures***

A respondent mentioned that inspection measures were highly ineffective. Performance measures were seen to be to process based when they should be far more outcomes based. These respondents were also highly critical of the targets driven nature of social work services and saw this as an issue for the public sector in general. One respondent considered it to be based upon a 'tick box'. Clients rarely fit into neat boxes and often care provision needs to be far more creative in order to provide a true level of quality care that reflects client need.

### ***Single assessments and access points***

Clients should have single assessment processes, or at least a much more simplified process. The respondents that raised the issue were critical of the multiple assessments conducted by different professionals involved in care packages for clients. There is demand for more collaborative working creating shared assessments that draw on the wider opinions of professionals within and also out with social work.

Places of access to services also have to become far more relevant and tailored to the service user. Locations have to be more innovative and found within local communities.

Information about services has to become far more readily available, clear and concise. Clients as well as social work staff and other professionals need to be able to access information easily to help them make informed, detailed decisions about the best option for care provision.

### ***Breaking stigmas and promoting the image of social work***

Considerably high proportions of respondents were dismayed by the negative images and stigmas that surrounded social work services, as well as the considerable levels of mistrust and dislike of social workers more specifically.

Many of these respondents felt it was important to boost the media image and public profile of social work. Some respondents felt political figures and senior related figures had to be far more cautious of the negative images that they may help propagate.

### *Clarity of the role of social work and social workers*

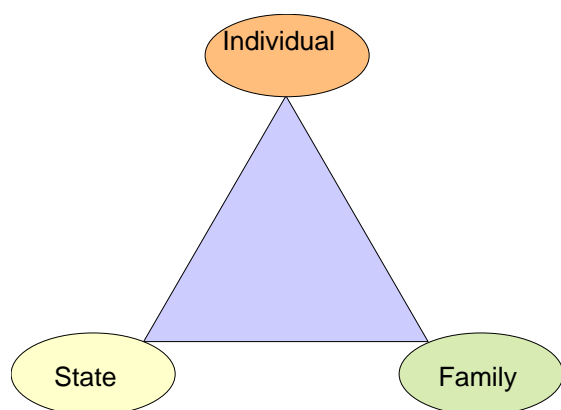
The role of the social worker needs to be well established and recognised to ensure that social work and professionals out with social work services are clear as to what their role is in relation to client care. Clarity is essential within an increasingly collaborative world of service provision, in conjunction with the development of assistant staff within social work itself. One respondent mentioned that social workers had lost their strong professional identity.

All respondents clearly recognised the value of social work and the role that the social worker plays. Therefore there is strong demand to ensure that social workers have the professional autonomy and correct levels of authority to inform and bring about the correct kinds of care. Social work has to be recognised and supported by other professions.

### *The balance between an individual's rights to social care services and their own or their family's responsibility for care*

Many respondents commented that the relationship between the state, the family and the individual are constantly shifting over time due to economic, political and social causes. A smaller number of respondents considered the relationship to be 'a constantly shifting triangulation' and this concept is depicted in diagram 6. The call for contributions asked respondents if they felt any changes were required in relation to this triangulation.

### *The triangulation of care service providers [diagram 6]*



### *The individual*

A small number of respondents commented that clients tend to be highly dependent upon social workers and the services that they provide; and almost all of these respondents suggested that service users should be encouraged to become less reliant. In relation to this, a key role of the social worker remit is empowering and encouraging clients to be self-reliant. Social workers should encourage clients to take control, think for themselves and help them break away from their problems, with the correct levels of support and advice that should be provided. Social work should enable a gradual transition to independent living.

### *The family*

Many respondents felt there is an ever increasing importance and demand upon the role of the family in terms of responsibility for care. One respondent was particularly adamant that it was actually a family obligation. A majority of respondents felt that the support from families and carers was key to the success of client care and successful social work services provision, and were strongly supportive of it. However there was also wide

acknowledgment of the increasing disinterest in caring for relatives. There was a consensus that the role carer's play has to be recognised and there is a demand for improved support and advice for them. A smaller proportion of respondents also mentioned that carers and the wider family should be far more involved in the decision making process.

Main points were:

- Families more geographically dispersed.
- Women's increased role within the workforce.
- Pressure to undertake paid employment.
- The necessity of dual parent employment.
- The inflexibility and disablement of relatives that act as carers.

### *The state*

Resources are clearly finite however the state has to be far more creative in its approach to care. A few respondents also mentioned that when social work services are considering the rebalance between the individual and the family responsibility for care, wider consideration needs to include health services, pensions and accommodation as well as community care.

### *The balance between the state, the family and the individual*

Many participants recognised that each service user should always have the relevant support and be able to access the appropriate services they may require regardless of their family background. Responses to need will be experienced differently by each service user due to their exacting relationships, standards and specific circumstances, which will all affect the level of family and individual responsibility. There has to be recognition that there is no singular model that could be produced to establish when care is the responsibility of social work.

Rather than trying to establish a fixed triangulation relationship, many respondents suggested that approaches to care have to emphasise partnership and collaboration with family relations and the individual. Solutions to care needs can be addressed by effective consultation and engagement. There has to be recognition that there is a diversity of care options.

## **Managing demands for services**

### *Managing access to social work services fairly and the role of the social worker and other public service workers in doing this*

Responses have been divided into those from LAs, Voluntary organisations, health, a service user, SWs and social work institutions.

### *LA Responses*

Responses from North Ayrshire Council Social Services, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council.

One of the submissions felt that the current emphasis in social work is on meeting the needs of those individuals with the greatest needs, at the expense of providing community services. They felt that more people could benefit from the skills and services of social work services if only they were able to access them. They felt that the potential benefits of accessing low level/preventative/early intervention services was there, but a shift in the expectations of social work services and the resources allocated to them was required to deliver such benefits.

The allocation of resources, locally and nationally, needs to be based on fair criteria, and planning of resource deployment on sound assessment of population needs. These processes have to be transparent. Access to resources should be managed fairly by having clear eligibility criteria based on assessed need, policy and resource availability and making these available to the staff who make decisions, the agencies that refer, the service users and the general public. Quality assurance measures and performance audit could check whether access is managed fairly.

Suggestions on how to promote transparent, fair resource allocation included providing every service user with a copy of their needs assessment and care plan to demonstrate how their needs will be met. This would act to empower service users to question resource allocation. Another suggestion was that access to advocacy services should be possible for any service user who needs support in ensuring their needs are met or has a concern/complaint.

All of the local authority responses acknowledged that it was impossible to avoid SWs and other public sector workers acting as gatekeepers to services. This was due to the finite nature of resources and local government's legislative duty to ensure that resources were targeted at those most in need. There was agreement that this duty has to be balanced by SWs with the need for their practice to be non-discriminatory and led by the needs of the person.

There was support noted for the personalisation agenda in giving people greater choice and control over how their needs were met. Increased emphasis on co-production with the service user as an equal partner in the design of a service would improve outcomes for service users. It was noted that further development of the personalisation agenda could create tensions in terms of standard setting, inspection and regulation.

Aberdeen City Council is currently examining these issues within the context of a local social work workforce review. The potential of a service delivery model called 'direct care' is being assessed. The model would aim to provide easy and fast access to information and some early response services based on self assessment. This would mean that resource intensive assessment processes would therefore only be used for longer term or more intensive services. It was noted that this model could lead to increased demand and would therefore not be resource neutral. This would need to be weighed up against the potential benefits of providing more effective services and better value for money.

### ***Voluntary Organisations***

Skill Scotland, ENABLE Scotland, Quarriers, Autism in Scotland, Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit, Alzheimer Scotland, Children 1<sup>st</sup>

A number of the voluntary organisation responses demonstrated concern about SWs acting as gatekeepers, one stating *"We would completely disagree with the statement that part of a social workers job can be to decide on the services that a person can or cannot get"*<sup>6</sup>. Rather than SWs acting as gatekeepers, voluntary organisations felt that they should be seen as enablers and/or 'facilitators of support': *"this is not deciding what a person can or cannot get it is about assessing what a person needs and deciding first and foremost what you as a practitioner might do"*<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> ENABLE Scotland Response, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Work Review, 2<sup>nd</sup> call for contributions, p4

<sup>7</sup> ENABLE Scotland Response, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Work Review, 2<sup>nd</sup> call for contributions, p4

Children 1<sup>st</sup> in particular felt that the available resources would be best used to support family functioning and not as an alternative to family care and involvement. In general, they felt that FGC should be mainstreamed through:

- LAs offering FGC as part of their policies and procedures giving all families (within identified criteria) the option of FGC to frame their own decision making.
- FGC enables roles and responsibilities to be shared. The role of SWs and other professionals becomes simply to identify what resources they can - and cannot- offer a family and follow this through where required.
- FGC could shift the balance from reactive high-cost services to preventative and community based services.

There was agreement that in an ideal world assessment tools would be entirely transparent and available for self assessment. There was also acknowledgement that currently assessment tools function to ration services e.g. unless the level of need reached a certain threshold no service was offered. Other barriers to fair access included issues surrounding users' differing abilities to make their case e.g. sometimes service users who shouted the loudest received more services. This problem could be addressed through an increased use of advocacy.

In order for access to be managed fairly there also needs to be more clarity about what social work would or would not fund, in conjunction with more clarity around who meets other needs thus preventing gaps in availability e.g. clarification on the extent of SW responsibilities around support for disabled students in college for personal care, accessible transport and social support.

Across the voluntary submissions it was felt that access to services should be based on person-centred provision e.g. SW working with a disabled person to identify what assistance they need in order to live their life as they choose. Whilst there was recognition given to the nature of finite resources it was felt that the current arrangements for controlling access to services sometimes have more to do with following bureaucratic regulations than meeting actual need.

It was noted that SWs are not necessarily the most appropriate first point of contact for all service users. One suggestion put forward on achieving the best use of SW resources was through the development of one stop shops, funded and delivered by the statutory sector. These could provide service users with information and signposting e.g. to housing services, CAB's or (if necessary) to a SW. A key role of the SW is seen to be the co-ordination of multi-disciplinary inputs.

One voluntary organisation submission stated that they felt more clarity around social work responsibilities needs to be established within legislation, and worked out locally within written agreements, such as the agreements set out in 'Partnership Matters'<sup>8</sup>.

Many of the voluntary submissions argued that in order to better manage demand for services more resources would be required e.g. in terms of resourcing early intervention models and specialist provision, knowledge and expertise. It was felt that funding arrangements need to be less rigid and more responsive, recognising individual support requirements rather than categories e.g. the needs of a child with a disability do not normally decrease when they reach age 18, but the funding available through adult services could be significantly less. There was also felt to be significant variations between services in different areas - a 'postcode lottery'. This needs to be addressed in

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<sup>8</sup> Scottish Executive, Partnership Matters: A guide to local authorities, NHS Boards and voluntary organisations on supporting students with additional needs in further education, 2004

terms of funding allocated according to need rather than being imposed along geographical boundary lines.

More staff time was needed to work in partnership with other agencies. SWs were seen as needing more time and support to work out local agreements and to ensure that they work in practice.

### *Health*

There was one response from the Centre for Change and Innovation. The main points were:

- Need to identify where the role of social work and a SW is an absolute requirement and make efforts to ensure that they play a key role in making assessments and initiating care.
- Skill Mix - make sure that SWs are used appropriately and use other workers to do aspects of the job e.g. paperwork completed by administration staff, interviews completed by other members of social care teams.
- Social work should embrace some of the tools and techniques for redesign that are being used in health.
- The services than an individual can or cannot access should depend on their identified needs, and the resources should be made available locally to deliver that care and to meet that need.

### *Service User*

There was one response from a service user. Their main points were:

- Clients need to be treated as individuals not 'textbook cases'.
- Post code lottery must be removed.
- Clients must not be 'dictated to'. SW's and other public service workers should encourage and support clients to 'think for themselves'.

### *Social Workers*

- Need to invest heavily in good and well paid administrative support to front line staff - freeing up SWs to use their skills for the job they are paid to do.
- Need improved training for managers giving them the ability to support the autonomy of other managers and staff.

### *Social Work Institutions*

2 responses from BASW and SSSC. The key points were:

- BASW members would much rather see themselves as gateways to services rather than gatekeepers.
- Need flexibility in how resources can be deployed. Currently difficult to find imaginative solutions to issues facing individuals and their families due to resource restrictions e.g. teenage mother not being able to have her baby with her in a young people's unit causing a forced separation with the baby being placed in foster care.
- Important that the service user feels that they are getting the right resource as they are the expert in their own life. From their perspective it will be not be important *which* person helps but rather that someone helps them to get the right solution.
- Skill mix - since qualified SWs are a scarce and relatively expensive professional resource need to analyse where specific social work skills are needed. This would be based on a wider understanding of what it is SWs do, that others are not specifically trained to do. This will then identify what work could be carried out by other suitably trained, social service workers.

## Use of Technology

### *Meeting people's social care needs using technology*

#### *Information & Communication*

There is a very obvious enthusiasm from both social care staff and their clients for the use of technology in meeting service needs of users. In particular, use of the internet as a key tool is seen as perhaps the most significant development. The more service users can utilise the internet for the independence they desire, the more time and resources will be freed up for social care staff. The internet is particularly effective in engaging with the young. However there is an acceptance that not all service users will be able or willing to use the internet for assistance; although future generations will become more computer literate and the demand for self-assessment and services on-line will surely increase. Social services must acknowledge this and ensure that the services it offers on-line meet user needs and expectations. Acknowledgement of the importance of the role social services can contribute to telephone help-lines and using such media as DVD for informational purposes are also highlighted.

#### *Assistance to people who are housebound*

Appliances to assist those who are housebound was another key area highlighted. Development and the introduction of the many pilot schemes carried out must be pursued in order to achieve this as well as the utilisation of existing technology such as SMART homes. Although there is strong support for the development of technology in meeting service users' needs, it is seen as supplementary to direct work with clients and not a replacement.

### *Using technology to organise social care services*

#### *Information sharing and amalgamated systems*

Clearly there is a level of frustration felt by social care staff that technology is not being utilised enough to share information. One of the reasons for this is that different Local Authorities and organisations use different, incompatible systems. There is strong support for a single system to be used across the board for storing and retrieving information. This system could include not only the records from social care staff but also those from health, education, police etc. This would be a major step forward in terms of service integration.

#### *Communication and mobility*

Another major benefit that technology can exploit is that of mobility, especially for social care staff based in rural settings. This could be achieved by providing all staff out of the office with handheld computers and mobile phones. The security of the lone worker would also be increased. Although social care staff embrace the use of new technology there is the caveat that the main benefit of more effective technology would be the time freed up to do more direct work with service users.

## Other Issues

### *Other factors that would strengthen social work services in Scotland*

Most respondents strongly praised community localised approaches to care provision. The perceived advantages raised were:

- Services can be far more flexible and tailored specifically to needs within localised areas.
- Services can be far more flexible.
- Care provided can be creative, innovative and individualised.
- Services can be delivered in a more preventative rather than reactive form.
- There can be more emphasis upon self help and empowerment of the individual client.
- Effective engagement and consultation can take place.
- Can produce community cohesion and social inclusion.

Another popular theme was the integration agenda. Examples raised were shared understandings, decisions and inspections, common policies/legislation, joint working and co-operation. A particular respondent more specifically highlighted the importance of further integration of health, education and voluntary sector as well as social work systems and services.

Having a core set of generic social work abilities was recognised by a few respondents as something that could strengthen social work services in Scotland. Specialist roles also need to be encouraged that could be highly responsive to the more complex and intricate problems of service users e.g. in drug abuse, mental health problems or possibly issues for the deaf/blind needs to occur alongside this. While the role of the generic social worker was seen as very important, respondents felt that there will be a need for a sound infrastructure to facilitate onward referral to intermediate and specialist levels of expertise at the local and national level.

Stress was placed upon better recognition of diversity and difference. No single client is the same. Responses to individualised care have to consider specific conditions like disability, mental problems as well as differences of race, cultural/religious background, age and gender. Recognition of the increasing proportions of individualistic needs and interests has to be made while also recognising the wider changes to society such as a growing elderly population or increasing immigration.

A few respondents felt that social workers and front line staff should be enabled to contribute to the broader work of social work services by informing and participating in planning, policy and service development. One respondent also mentioned that they should be able to contribute to corporate developments like SIPs, community health partnerships and community planning.

Other examples raised were:

- Better use of para professionals, administration and finance staff.
- A national framework for pay and reward.
- A review and consolidation of social work legislation.
- Better support for carers, with less burden placed upon the family to support their relatives.
- Encouraging sharing examples of good and bad practice amongst the profession.
- Joined up thinking and improved leadership from the Scottish Executive.

### ***Areas that need to be significantly changed***

Responses were found to be highly diverse and opinionated in response to the question of what needs significant change. In spite of this, there was clear evidence of common feeling amongst a large proportion of the respondents as to the necessity for clarity in the role of the social worker and social work. In addition a few respondents noted the importance of clarity within the context of a variety of care sectors and providers.

Another dominant theme was insufficient levels of professional recognition for social workers and social work staff. Some respondents felt better recognition could be achieved through reasonable pay and reward. Low levels of morale amongst social workers was regularly noted. Whilst the lack of professional recognition was seen as a contributing factor to this, it was not the only source of denigration. Recruitment and retention was also recognised as being neither extensive nor effective enough.

A further occurring theme was the blame culture that surrounds social work and more specifically, social workers. Some respondents felt that this contributed to a tradition of fear in social workers who felt their work was compromised by being high risk. There was also extensive support amongst these respondents for improvements to be made concerning the image of social work, particularly media perceptions.

Respondents regularly mentioned that social work services were not responsive enough. Reasons given for this lack of responsiveness however were different amongst the responses as noted below:

- Lack of effective networking and collaboration with agencies and departments relation to client care.
- Lack of effective provision for specialist requirement needs i.e. people who are deaf, blind and disabled.
- There needs to be a single access point that is effective and highly responsive to client need from staff that are considerate and sufficiently trained.
- Does not provide a 24 hour, 365 days a year assistance.
- Over regulation, with high levels of mistrust. Problematic processes of inspection that are centred on tick box approaches.

Most participants also had comments related to social workers themselves and there was demand to:

- Have networks of support surrounding them.
- Life long learning opportunities and clearer paths for carer development.
- The time and resources to build important client relationships with person centred values.
- Uncompromised good practice.
- Ensure all social workers have sufficient levels of commitment and understanding.
- Prevent workload burnout.

Although less frequently, issues concerning the voluntary sector also arose. There was demand for improved recognition and appreciation of their contribution to social work provision, with particular reference to their expert specialist knowledge.

### ***What needs to be retained and built upon?***

There were fewer examples of what could be retained and built upon to improve social work services for the future. However, what was mentioned tended to be rather similar amongst the respondents, and almost all included comments about retaining the value base that social workers have. This value base tends to include the broad values of social inclusion, empowerment for clients, and being responsive and reactive to client need.

Some respondents more specifically claimed that these values should be equally important to all kinds of clients whether they suffered addictions, mental health problems, sensory impairments, or domestic violence etc. One respondent saw this enablement as 'closing the gap' - an attempt to minimise the effects difference has upon individuals.

Another strong theme that emerged was the enthusiasm for increasing service user and carer participation. There was demand to allow them to challenge practice, criticise services and ask for change. Participants also mentioned that clients should be enabled and encouraged where possible to self assess and direct their own care.

A few proposed that a generic role for the social worker was highly desirable. A common set of shared morals and purpose was seen as key to providing a clearer social work identity and ensuring consistency of care provision.

A strong learning culture with robust professional development was another example of what needs to be retained and built upon. Some of these respondents went on to mention the similarities and overlap that other professions have with social work. A few respondents developed this idea by suggesting joint training, co professions and learning from other care sectors such as health, criminal justice or housing.

**Other less common examples raised were:**

- Continued encouragement of the recruitment of individuals from diverse backgrounds i.e. ethnic minorities.
- Retain local government with the key strategic and leadership role. Allowing decisions surrounding planning, commissioning and delivery of services to be made at a more localised level.
- Continue to develop leadership capacity within the workforce to ensure high quality professional leadership for the future.

A few respondents also mentioned that campaigns need to be continued to raise awareness of social work, particularly amongst the general public. Campaigns such as 'See Me' for mental health was raised as a good example of effective public campaigning. One respondent was particularly adamant that there needs to be more awareness of the issues that people who use social work services confront. There has to be recognition that stigmas and negative portrayals not only affect social work itself, but also social work service users.

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