

## **Briefing from the Association of Directors of Social Work**

### **Scottish Government debate on 'Changing Lives: A competent, confident and valued social service workforce'**

**Thursday 28 April 2010**

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ADSW is the professional association for senior social work managers and in this capacity would like to provide you with some information for your debate.

In considering this issue, ADSW would ask that MSPs are mindful of the huge and varied contribution that social workers and social care workers make to communities and to the lives of the most vulnerable people in society. There are 163 000 people who work in social work and social care across Scotland; 650 000 Scots and their families use social services every year; 84% of people using social work services say that they are good quality and 76% say that they help them lead more independent lives; and most of us will, at some point in our lives, use or help a family member make use of social work services.

#### **Social Work Changes Lives PR Campaign**

In April 2009, ADSW and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) launched a campaign aimed at counteracting some of the negative publicity that surrounds social work, and at presenting a positive image of the profession. Our research shows that more people now have a positive view of social work, and this is despite the very negative portrayal of the profession during the recent high profile cases of Brandon Muir and Baby Peter by the media.

The campaign has now been extended for a further 12 months.

Further information on the campaign is available at: <http://www.adsw.org.uk/About/Social-Work-Changes-Lives/>

#### **Local Practitioner Forums**

Changing Lives recommended the establishment of local practitioner forums as a way of encouraging debate about policy and practice amongst staff on the front line. With assistance from ADSW and support from their councils 27 councils now have a local practitioner forum, with other in the process of doing so; we have an annual local practitioner conference; and we are about to recruit a part-time national chair of this group to allow it to develop further and influence policy.

#### **Personalisation**

The personalisation agenda has huge implications for the workforce, but it is a challenge we need to meet in order that we can provide the care that people want in the future. Personalisation is all about choice: what care people want, when they want it and who they want to provide it. The challenge for the workforce is to shift from designing care packages for people who use services to enabling and empowering them to make the right choices for themselves. It is also about realistic assessment of risks for people who want to live more independently for longer.

In order to help councils achieve personalisation, ADSW is supporting demonstration areas across Scotland, supporting change and sharing learning widely. ADSW and our partners in government and

the voluntary sector are striving to meet that challenge and we believe that this agenda has taken a huge step forward since the Changing Lives report.

A detailed report on this and other issues around personalisation is available from our website: <http://www.adsw.org.uk/Our-Work/Publications/>

## **Challenges for the future**

Despite the good work and positive impact of the Changing Lives report, there are significant challenges that lie ahead for the social work and social care workforce.

### *Demand for services*

We all know the demographics: more older people living longer and wanting to be supported in their own homes. We also know that the population of children is reducing, yet the demand for services from that population is increasing. The main reasons are: the increase in children living longer with complex disabilities and illness, which they could not have survived 20 years ago; and the increase in the number of alcohol and substance misusing parents, the children of whom need support, care and protection.

The particular areas of demand about which we are concerned include:

- The significant increase in care and protection referrals, and according to the SWIA Overview Report, the increasing cost of children's services at the expense of older people services in some parts of Scotland. With demand from both areas growing, this is unsustainable.
- The likely increases in the number of adult protection referrals, following the implementation of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act and the uncertainty regarding funding for the effective implementation of this important piece of legislation.
- The continuing high costs for individualised, responsive services for people with learning disabilities.
- The need for a step change to early intervention and preventative work, which is more effective in the long term, while continuing to support the people who are receiving services now. The implementation of the Early Years Framework is a good example of this.

There are two areas which could alleviate some of the pressures on the workforce to cope with demand for services: the role of universal services and the development of community capacity building.

### *Role of universal services*

Universal services such as education and health retain responsibility for individual with complex and challenging needs. Our current systems pass individuals on from one part of the system to another when certain artificial thresholds are reached. For example, a child is "referred" from education to social work, or from health to social work. The culture change that is required would see universal services continuing to own responsibility for the child, whilst seeking input from specialist, targeted services, such as social work. This would add value, keep the child at the centre and create additional capacity within social work and other specialist services to allow for more children's needs to be met. These principles underpin the Getting it Right for Every Child approach. There is no reason why these same principles should not apply to services for adults as well.

## *Community capacity building*

The time for an open debate about individual, community and state responsibility has arrived. There is less money to go round and if those people who need it most are to receive meaningful assistance, we need to focus on creating both the willingness and the capacity of communities to contribute. This was a key recommendation of Changing Lives. We need to invest in communities to support each other and rely less on the state. We need to shift the current culture of expectation that the state is responsible for all provision. Building community capacity is more effective and longer lasting than any individual services the state can provide and in the current economic climate it is something that we really need to debate.

ADSW is currently working with the voluntary sector, the violence reduction unit, police and 3 local authorities on a community capacity building project. This work, which is partly funded by the Scottish Government, aims to strengthen the role of communities in working with young people who offend. This project will be evaluated by Edinburgh University.

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