



Our foundations and our future



THE LEGACY OF ADSW

(Association of Directors of Social Work)

A brief history

The Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) was constituted in October 1969 in response to the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, an immensely important landmark in Scottish social work history, which in turn was influenced by the Kilbrandon report of 1964.

The Act, seen as both radical and progressive, acknowledged the importance of understanding the multiple influences on individuals, for example, personal characteristics; family and relationships; community and state. It sought an end to segregated Welfare, Children and Health and Probation committees in favour of an approach that more effectively mirrored the true presentation of people and their issues. This new thinking set the template for modern social welfare approaches.

The Act also led to the creation of social work departments and established social work as a professional service within local government. It further determined that a local authority would appoint an officer known to be a 'Director of Social Work': a post given wide ranging responsibilities and also protection.

ADSW membership at the time of its constitution was open to all Directors of Social Work appointed by local authorities under the Act. The main objects of the Association were stated as 'the promotion of social welfare and the promotion of the interests of service users'.

Under this professional structure, Scotland developed strong leaders openly representing the cause of the most vulnerable people and seeking equality and fairness in Scotland. Section 12 payments, for example, were made to destitute miners' families during the strikes of 1984/5, authorised by a Director of Social Work, despite much institutional opposition. The inclusion of the most disenfranchised in society was the priority: practice being governed by values that placed the citizen at the heart of planning. In 1994, the Local Government (Scotland) Act heralded the end of the statutory requirement for a Director of Social Work, but largely as a result of lobbying from ADSW, determined to protect the unique contribution of social work, the Act required councils to appoint a Chief Social Work Officer.



In 1998, ADSW was restructured in line with changes in local government, developing a committee structure to reflect the range of concerns and pressures in providing social work services. A Directors' Group was established and the Standing Committee structure was streamlined into five committees – Children and Family Care; Community Care; Criminal Justice Services; Standards, Training and Research; and Finance.

Over time, the Association has continued to adapt its structure and approach in line with legislative, policy and practice priorities: establishing a committee on Substance Misuse, for example, and opening membership to grades of staff below that of Director and Chief Social Work Officer. The committees and their specialist sub groups work tirelessly to inform national policy and legislation, and find solutions to some of the most challenging issues faced by communities and individuals.

The work of the Association

Since its inception, ADSW has played a key role nationally in ensuring developments affecting social work are consistent with its professional values, whilst acknowledging the importance of local determination in finding workable solutions. Over recent years, ADSW has also developed partnerships with other countries in the UK and Europe, leading to shared knowledge, international networks and joint research.

These networks have assisted ADSW to make significant contributions to the public sector reform agenda, particularly in the fields of integration of health and social care and in self-directed support, by articulating issues around prevention, care, protection and control, balanced with the right to choose.

ADSW has developed a close working relationship with both the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) in lobbying government for funding and in developing and responding to new legislation; and with the Scottish Government: securing funding to employ staff and lead change management programmes, following national policy and legislative developments.

These relationships have allowed ADSW to play an integral part in the development of the following pieces of legislation and policy, and the practice that has and will flow from them: The Changing Lives Report



from the 21st Century Review of Social Work, published in 2006; the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013; the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014; the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act; the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; and the review of Community Justice in Scotland.

Supporting change

Since ADSW was established there have been fundamental changes in social work.

Changes in policy have reflected (and in turn influenced) thinking about the purpose of social work and its contribution to society. The policy emphasis in social work has changed from a duty to promote social welfare to an emphasis on well-being, empowering citizens and giving more choice and control to people.

The promotion of human rights and justice though tackling social inequalities and disadvantage continue to be the key principles that are fundamental to the values of the work. In addition, reform in the public sector is being driven by a new emphasis on achieving inclusion through partnership with people who need assistance and with those who support them: professionals, carers and communities.

This drive to achieve more personalised services takes place within a context of global economic downturn and an increase in demand for services for older people, living longer but often with poor health. In the quest for continuous improvement through rebuilding public services on the basis of the needs of people and place, ADSW represents members who seek imaginative, locally inspired solutions, which recognise the diversity of Scotland; contribute professional expertise and governance, knowledge and realism, all underpinned by long held values of social justice.

ADSW has been a strong voice in Scottish public services since it was created. However, the scale and implications of the changes underway led the Association to review its role and function to ensure it is equipped to carry out its important work for another 45 years.

On 6 March 2014, at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the ADSW, members accepted a resolution to change the name, membership criteria, operating protocols and general ethos of the organisation. The



new organisation, Social Work Scotland was launched at the annual conference on 18 June 2014.

We would like to acknowledge here the immense contribution of all those who have supported the Association over the years: the past presidents; the members; the standing committee chairs and vice chairs; the sub group members; the staff; and all the people who give their time, knowledge and expertise to ensure the profession of social work is as good as it can be.



OUR FUTURE

Social Work Scotland

Social Work Scotland is now the leadership organisation for the social work profession. We represent social workers and other professionals who lead and support social work across all sectors.

Our vision is of a social work profession across Scotland which is led effectively and creatively; is responsive to the needs of the people we support and protect; is accessible and accountable; and promotes social justice.

Our values are based on professional leadership to achieve social justice and public protection. We value each person we support as an individual, without judgement; we celebrate and actively promote the unique contribution and role of professional social work; we embrace change and encourage collaborative and integrated arrangements to deliver better outcomes for people; and we support and create opportunities for those within and those supporting the profession of social work in order that we can develop effective and creative leaders for the future.

Our mission is:

- to place people and their concerns and wishes at the heart of everything we do
- to share the benefit of our values, principles and professional expertise, which are based on supporting all aspects of an individual's life and take into account environment, circumstance, family and communities, with partners across other professions and organisations
- to embrace partnership working in order to provide a seamless service to people, which gives them the support, advice and services they need
- to ensure that Social Work Scotland represents the views of its members to government, parliament and people across the country, in order to improve the experience of people who use our services and to improve the impact our services have on their lives
- to establish the profession of Social Work in the minds of public organisations, politicians and people as a valued and highly regarded profession, which makes a vital contribution to the lives of people who need our support



- to ensure our approach is proactive and that we work with the people we support to make sure legislation, policy and practice are fit for purpose and give them the ability to live the life they choose
- to share good work, ideas and practice amongst our membership in order to pool our resources and thinking to the benefit of individuals and communities
- to be open to new ideas and to challenge ourselves and our colleagues, so that our approaches are fresh and innovative and benefit the people who need our support.

Organisational and wider social change

Scotland’s public sector faces many challenges and expectations: from demographic changes and unprecedented volumes of demand; raised hopes and ambitions of a new and better type of support for people; expectations of improved performance, and better personal outcomes delivered in an integrated and co-produced way; challenges from the impact of drug and alcohol misuse on adults, children and prison populations; from a plethora of aims and aspirations originating from the public sector reform agenda, which need to be shaped into deliverable tasks.

Social Work Scotland represents staff in a sector that most people will use at some point in their lifetime. It is well placed to take a pivotal role in finding workable solutions to the challenges that lie ahead.

The role of social work as a profession operating within democratic processes and with a focus on social justice, social welfare and law (including social work’s role in protecting and safeguarding individuals and the public) brings a unique perspective to the discussions. Furthermore, the knowledge that social work brings to the understanding of the wider influences that impact on individuals means that Social Work Scotland will be key to meeting some of the country’s biggest challenges, now and in the future.

The case for change

It is within the context of additional responsibilities, increased expectations and reduced resources in the public sector that ‘Social Work Scotland’ is born. The time has come for change: the Association’s structure and membership no longer reflected the way modern services are delivered in an integrated, personalised, whole system way. In short,



we must find new solutions with partners and we must invest more in the particular knowledge and skill that exists across the levels of our organisations.

Identifying role and function consistent with vision and aims

As an organisation, we will include as members, senior staff who deliver social work services from a non-local authority social work base. Our membership will also include staff who are more directly involved in delivering operational services below senior management level. This is consistent with our stated intention of recognising and utilising the contribution of staff according to the knowledge they have to offer, rather than by their grade or work location.

We will ensure that the membership of our organisation reflects the skill mix required to deliver effective, modern services; one where leaders, specialists and experienced operational managers collaborate to provide a whole picture of the sector’s work, which, in turn, works to support the individual within their wider context. We aim to make the aspiration of partnership our organisational reality. We also intend to extend our learning through international collaboration: an approach to learning started in 2012. At a strategic level, these aims place best outcomes for individuals at the centre of our planning.

We must be financially sustainable as an organisation, and the manner in which this is achieved should also be consistent with the organisation’s wider aims. Several methods to ensure sustainability are proposed:

First, widening membership will expand our knowledge base and influence.

Second, the Association’s partnership work with the Scottish Government that involves delivering and leading change through commissioned projects provides the dual benefit of enabling the workforce to shape national developments and also financially supports Social Work Scotland to employ officers.

Third, Social Work Scotland will continue to support joint enterprise with commercial sector business partners. We will continue to expand the development of our own business opportunities by supporting the sector through the injection of expertise in areas such as leadership and organisational and professional development providing short-term support



and interim management cover. Our goal is to work in partnership, finding innovative solutions at all levels, contributing to strategic thinking and operational efficiencies.

The contribution of Social Work Scotland

Social Work Scotland has a big agenda and a valuable and unique contribution to make in a number of key areas:

Policy development

Core themes cutting across current priority policy agendas in Scotland include: the development of flexible, community based services around people's needs and their jointly identified outcomes; services and support that shift power and control towards individuals; services and court disposals that prioritise community solutions; support that is designed and commissioned jointly and delivered in an integrated manner across sectors and services; planning that takes a whole person, whole system approach and includes prevention and early intervention.

The value that Social Work Scotland brings to policy development, however, extends beyond current policy priorities, offering a broader perspective to the process which is informed by knowledge of all service user groups, current practice and operational capacity. Working at the interface of policy development with the Scottish Government and alongside COSLA and other partners is a priority for Social Work Scotland. This will contribute to the creation of a cohesive, creative and realistic legislative and policy context within Scotland.

Professional sector leadership

Providing leadership for, and representation of the social work services sector and those who use and benefit from our services is a primary function for Social Work Scotland. This work also involves supporting leadership and the development of sound governance.

The organisation must also have a clearly articulated and persuasive vision of our key issues and the professional social work values that underpin them, how these should be progressed and for what benefits.

Ambitions for partnership working, for example, must be mirrored by collaborative leadership practice in action. Good leadership and governance in the reformed public service arena require an affirmation of the contribution of others through the development of constructive



alliances. Close dialogue with regulation and inspection bodies, for example, will assist in driving change aimed at more proportionate, appropriate, productive and flexible monitoring and regulation.

Social Work Scotland has a leadership role in affirming and sustaining the contribution of staff in the sector. One avenue for achieving this is in the proactive development of a positive media image and effective engagement with communities. Social work services across the sectors, alongside our health and local government colleagues, play a key role in strengthening the economy of the country, through enabling individuals and communities to achieve their potential and contribute positively to society. The traditional image of the profession as a defender of the most vulnerable fails to acknowledge the wider contribution made by social work services and the people they support. Re-defining and consolidating the important role that social work service staff play is an essential function for our organisation.

Workforce issues

Social Work Scotland will work closely with councils, the Scottish Social Services Council and others to ensure, as far as possible, that the supply and deployment of the workforce remain in step with projected demands. This is a part of wider activities aimed at future proofing plans and will include a focus on succession planning within the sector.

A priority for our organisation will be to support the establishment of sustainable, productive links between learning institutions and operational services that will help to shape skill development in an informed, relevant, timely and appropriate manner. Social Work Scotland will continue to support the engagement of practitioners with these and other national policy agendas.

Capacity and resource issues

Social Work Scotland recognises the need to change and improve services to meet increasing demands and challenges. Long-term conditions, for example, are expected to triple by 2050.

Social Work Scotland has a key role, alongside COSLA and other partners, in contributing to the dialogue regarding the allocation of an acceptable level of funding and resources to meet policy priorities.

The requirement for change, however, also presents an opportunity for



public services to work together more effectively. The public sector reform programme drives forward change that is consistent with best social work values.

Capacity within the sector can be increased by identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, innovation, which is a means of delivering better outcomes with limited resources. An essential function of our organisation is the sharing of intelligence on innovations and re-shaped services, including those that have resulted in savings. It provides an important communication network through its committees and by less formal means, connecting managers and practitioners working on similar agendas.

Social Work Scotland, providing expertise alongside other partners and operating as a conduit between national and local levels, will take a central role in informing the re-shaping of services and markets to meet policy demands more effectively within available resources. The profession brings considerable expertise to the partnership table. In particular, social work service professionals have experience of working in complex environments that require the effective balancing and gatekeeping of finite resources, whilst keeping social justice principles at the centre of activities.

With statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting individuals and communities, social work professionals are skilled at considering the whole person, and have an understanding of how and where individuals interact with their environment. These skills underpin community engagement and social enterprise techniques, both of which have the potential to make better use of scarce resources, find better solutions more quickly and invest in natural resources and assets over the next decade.

How we will do this

Social Work Scotland has a number of ways in which it can tackle the challenges and exploit the opportunities created by changes in our environment, policy and legislative contexts. Some are new and some are tried and tested.

- Promoting the values of social justice and public protection
- Leading thinking on social work services
- Maintaining high professional standards
- Influencing the policies of national and local government

- Communicating our views on key issues
- Actively promoting collaborative leadership across the sector
- Fostering and contributing to debates on social policy issues
- Working with the Scottish Government and other major partner organisations
- Working with the people we support, their family, carers and communities
- Sharing and extending good practice
- Offering advice and guidance
- Supporting partnership working and wider service integration
- Providing expert comment
- Promoting better understanding of social work
- Encouraging the development of future leaders
- Conducting and disseminating research





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