



scottish social services  
**learning network north**

## **The Challenge of Change**

**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2007**

**Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre**

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## **Foreward - Learning Network North Executive Group Chair**

The Learning Network North held its first major event on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2007 at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre and was deemed by those who attended as a great success.

The 101 delegates who came from a range of backgrounds travelled from a variety of locations around Scotland to participate in the event.

The speakers for the day were the leaders of the five Workstreams from the Scottish Executive, Changing Lives programme. This was the first occasion that they all attended an event together to discuss the Changing Lives agenda and enjoyed the experience. Delegates were updated on progress, had an opportunity to explore the links which exist between the Workstreams and crucially were able to contribute their views to this evolving agenda.

We would like to extend our thanks to all those who participated and to those who assisted on the day by facilitating the discussion forums.

We have collated the notes from the discussion groups and hope that they will be beneficial.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandy Riddell', written in a cursive style.

**Sandy Riddell**  
**Chair, Learning Network North**

## **Speakers' Profiles**

### **Janet Birks**

Presentation: Service Development - How the Change Programme Might Help You

Janet is Director of Housing & Social Work Services with Falkirk Council since 2001 having previously worked in a number of local authorities in Scotland and England. She co-chairs the Changing Lives Service Development Group with Nigel Henderson, Chief Executive of Penumbra.

### **Professor Sandy Cameron CBE**

Presentation: Changing Culture – Improving Performance

Sandy now holds a number of roles among various organisations but is best known as Chairman of the Parole Board for Scotland, He chairs the Performance Improvement Workstream of Changing Lives

### **David Crawford**

Presentation: Leadership & Management – actions, issues & ideas

David is Director of Social Work at Renfrewshire Council. He is President of the Association of Directors in Scotland. He is leading the [Changing Lives Implementation Plan](#) on Leadership and Management.

### **Andrew Lowe**

Presentation: Accountability & Autonomy, the AA of Social Work

Having originally trained for a career in Law Andrew moved to Scotland and into social work he is currently Director of Social Work at Borders Council . Andrew is leading the Practice Governance Workstream of Changing Lives.

### **Carole Wilkinson**

Presentation: Developing the Workforce: So What? – the Challenges of Implementing Changing Lives

After a career in practice and senior management Carole is currently the Chief Executive of the Scottish Social Services Council, she has participated in a number of national working groups. Carol is currently leading on the Workforce Workstream of Changing Lives.

## Summary of issues - Service Development Forums

The discussion groups considered the areas covered by the Workstream and identified the following aspects as support or areas for further consideration.

Personalisation of services is a positive way forward however concern for involuntary service users was expressed as was the tensions that exist in areas such as criminal justice and child protection.

The groups identified that personalisation already exists when person centred practice is utilised and also by people who choose to utilise direct payments. The potential risks of this option were raised and debated.

Financial restraint was seen to be a major issue. Service users' wants and expectations versus service provision of needs was seen as an area of possible conflict as was the need to ensure that equity and quality of service provision remains.

Opportunities for creativity in use of resources were seen as a positive way forward, however organisational policy may need to be adapted in order to facilitate this.

Scottish Executive direction versus localisation of services was referred to and the implications for the commissioning of block services were raised as areas that would need further consideration if personalisation were to be extended.

One group referred to the wider community involvement and developing a role for local engagement in supporting others and suggested that this appears to have fallen off the wider agenda. Equally the broader role of other professional services was referred to. The need for a multiple approach to planning and integration with wider services to ensure the needs of all are considered and provided for should be enhanced. Strategic agendas need to be complementary to enable progress to be made otherwise partner organisations may pull in opposite directions. Sharing of IT systems and data was also seen as beneficial to service development.

A framework to assist involvement of service users and carers in decision-making relating to individual processes would be welcomed to assist in the commissioning of appropriate services.

Partnership working was seen as a positive way forward and in order to maximise effectiveness more joint training would be supported. An area of good practice was identified as the domestic abuse training strategy. However language was seen as a barrier due to the varying way in which terms are used.

Changes in management and leadership were also reflected on. These, which are perceived as leading to changes in the culture of organisations and moves away from

risk-averse culture, were seen as a positive outcome of such changes. Performance Measurements remain in quantitative not qualitative terms and this is another area requiring consideration for improvement by this group.

Involvement of users and carers was supported but a view that the involvement of hands on practitioner was equally as important to service development. The make up of service improvement groups was questioned and the lack of involvement of users carers or practitioners in these forums was raised equally was the confidence that could be placed on the views put forward in such circumstances. Should more research be used and would this be representational?

Service users and carers are involved in the assessment of service provision. However the potential conflict of wants versus needs in a resource allocation framework may potentially become problematic when looking at the personalisation of services.

With regard to the Social Care workforce, it was suggested that the importance of front-line staff being seen as professionals should not be underestimated. It was suggested that a public relations exercise is needed.

The process of registration was seen as important however the process was seen as slow and the lack of time deadlines for groups of staff as unhelpful.

Key messages for further consideration that were highlighted covered:-

- Funding should be moved from protection to prevention
- Resource allocation and use needs consideration. Personalisation will impact on budgets and qualification needed for registration may have salary implications.
- PR for the sector is needed.
- Investing in preparing people for involvement
- Examine conflicting policy / procedure / legislation which does not assist personalisation
- Opportunity to move on service development – but how that happens is important

Recommended issues to be considered by the North of Scotland:-

- Induction for new care employees – can the Network have a role here in optimising a shared approach?
- Communities of practice - can the Network have a role whereby identifying champions in various service areas, providing an opportunity for action learning sets and using the elearning Communication Manager to optimise opportunities for sharing electronic media for employee development.
- Multi-agency networking and learning – can the Network identify and access funds to pilot joint opportunities in the north?

## Summary of issues - Performance Improvement Forums

The discussion groups considered the areas covered by the Workstream and identified the following aspects.

The discussion group identified that tensions exist when considering performance improvements. How is performance measured, is it quality or quantity that is important? Service providers determined that the need to do the job often leads to the focus being on outputs not outcomes; they believe that this has to change.

The group further considered “is performance improvement measured by meeting the expectation of individual clients” and if this is the case, how is this ascertained and verified? The group identified that tensions exist in organisations over this issue regarding the wants of clients versus needs of clients and related costs. The group identified that further work was required regarding mechanisms for “meaningful” service user involvement with a consistent approach to service user feedback, it’s collation and use.

In order to improve services a more joined up approach is needed. This needs to be both internally and externally to organisations. Simplified use of language, using common terms with clear definitions would be beneficial. This is needed across disciplines and allied professions.

‘Ownership’ of and for improvements has to be overcome. Everyone has to engage, embrace and change in a fully integrated way in order for the benefits to be maximised, for clients, staff and organisations.

## Summary of issues - Developing the Workforce Forums

The discussion groups identified that organisations need to develop a learning culture when learning occurred throughout the working week and in all areas of the organisation.

It was perceived that training is always a casualty when budget pressures arise so work is needed in order to convince strategic players of the value of training and development, possibly by improving the evidence base. Having better individual training plans reflecting personal and organisational needs that could be met within resources was considered. Training and development activities must be embedded in service plans was seen as critical to success.

Learning organisations should not emphasis one group of workers over others. A perception was expressed that social workers received more specific training than occupational therapists or childcare and early years workers thus creating elitism.

Maximise use of existing resources was identified as a way forward. More opportunities with partners to share were recommended with a reflection that current approaches tend to be too prescriptive. The need to ensure application to rural and remote areas was also stressed. The term “one size doesn’t fit all” was used to reflect on the wide range of organisational and individual needs. The group considered the Learning Network could have a role here, providing a distribution focus and retaining an information database of activities and resources.

With regard to finance the group considered how decisions relating to the additional grant for training and development are made. The group suggested that a more strategic approach within and across agencies should be developed in order to enable greater flexibility with budgets and money centrally, which would hopefully reduce the timescales of funding and the perceived “hoops” incurred. This strategic approach would also help in planning for the future.

The value of the career path was identified as a potential area for development. In considering this social care workers should all be part of the same valued social care profession was stated; how to make work in social care service an attractive career was queried and by giving the wrong message, who do we fail(?) was considered. The group also considered the suggestion of the new ‘para – professional’. The need increased statutory role for social workers considered and the variety of new roles now in existence was reflected upon.

The involvement of carers and service users was another aspect referred to in considering the development and growth of the workforce as were the needs of the migrant workforce; language, culture and training styles were cited as aspects needing further consideration.

## Summary of issues - Management and Leadership Forums

The group felt that the content of job roles needed to be considered along with the training that is needed in order for a person to undertake the role identified. Organisations need to be aware of what training is available and what is needed to undertake the job role. It was felt that there was still an assumption that good knowledge of a job was sufficient to ensure good leadership, and that promoting staff to leadership and management posts on professional abilities alone was not sufficient.

The idea of support for others' professional development as an essential part of all professionals' CPD is to be encouraged. It was also noted that many "leaders" are not in management posts, but sometimes feel that they have to be promoted in order to be recognised. There should also, therefore, be other ways of valuing contributions to leadership, by facilitating "horizontal" career moves and senior practitioner schemes.

There was some support for the idea of establishing an Assessment and Development Centre or a "national college" approach for social work management, similar to the system used by the police. Staff would only apply for a promoted post after undertaking the basic training and assessment. Mentoring when appointed would then provide support for them. However this would limit promotional roles to those who were already in a collaborative organisation and who had access to the system.

A great deal of social work leadership takes place in multi-agency contexts. There was some discussion about the skills needed to ensure that managers in multi-agency services agree values and aims. It was recognised that collaborative working does not just "happen" and management training can enhance appropriate skills. It was felt that synergy could be achieved by more joint activities being undertaken, particularly with regard to management training with partner organisations such as health.

There was discussion about whether a professional social work qualification or a management qualification was better for social work leadership in multi-agency contexts, and it was noted that already many senior care managers have other qualifications. The ideal would be someone with a good professional understanding and excellent management skills. There were seen to be advantages in associating at least some training in management skills, perhaps a minimum number of days, with registration requirements for all managers, in a similar way to the Registered Manager in a residential establishment. It was felt that there was some good practice in management going on locally, and it would be helpful to disseminate information about models that work well.

The group recognised that some aspects of management training courses were about teaching staff to understand themselves and their own style, and that although useful this did not always help in managing others. It was felt that there are some aspects of management that do have to be learnt on the job, and it would be very useful to have a more experienced person to offer guidance. There was a good deal of support for *mentoring* for staff new to management, especially in the early stages. It was noted that

the individual organisation's culture was a key element in the effectiveness of management and leadership. Without a supportive culture, sending senior staff away to management courses may energise them, but on their return to the workplace they could have little wider impact if the system is not supportive.

The group suggested that facilitating and assisting organisations to work together was a role that is needed along with the collation and circulation of information relating to training providers and materials available. The group thought that Network might be in a position to provide these activities.

## Summary of issues - Practice Governance Forums

This group thought that clarity of definition of this aspect was required. Different organisations and roles within organisations use differing terminology and this was identified as a clear issue. Let us speak the same language at all levels and keep it simple was the message given.

Discussions around evidence-based practice also took place and the fact that this needs time to be able to work effectively. However the group also acknowledged that conflicted resources came into play and this had a direct impact on time. The quality of teamwork was also seen as having a significant impact on effective working.

The group also raised the issue that varying practice methods and priorities have a significant impact. Whatever concept is “in” is used however the changes in practice methods should have closer links to research to ensure that changes can be justified. ‘What evidence do we have about what works?’ was a question raised.

The role of the Care Commission was raised and the need to ensure legislation is being followed. Frameworks for practice would assist with monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and would provide a mechanism for ensuring that standards equitable in all areas.

Autonomy was a factor of work in the sector however this should be linked with appropriate accountability. With regard to responsibility, the group asked who is responsible for what and acknowledged that this is different within organisations.

Trust between agencies and internally within people’s own agencies must be improved. The group also suggested that a blame culture still existed and expressed that steps are needed to move away from this situation.

The group felt that there was a sense of the Chief Social Work Officer being “out there”, and even within the group there were different levels of clarity about the role that questioned how advocating on behalf of staff could be achieved. Delegates could see a strong and influential role for CWSO to lead on behalf of the whole social work profession in all sectors to “sell” the profession and improve the image of the sector.

Staff have a responsibility within Codes of Practice to hear what service users and carers are saying and ensure their rights are upheld. CSWO should hear the voice of the social worker on behalf of the service user and carer and encourage a range of appropriate ways to involve service users and carers to be developed thus enabling informed choices which have a real effect on outcomes. It was also perceived that some services are still finance-led rather than needs-led, and this affects the quality of the outcomes for service users and carers.

Innovative ways of getting better involvement within Criminal Justice and Child Protection services are needed as working in partnership can be more difficult. It was identified that facilitating real representation of service users' views is about more than just "offering a perspective" to a meeting

Management of risk could be improved by sharing information. Examples of good practice were given: Integrated Case Management in criminal justice where prison and community-based workers share information and work together to manage risk. Elsewhere a "Practice Exchange" offers practitioners a way to get together.

The voluntary sector is often involved in supporting service users and carers, but there was a sense of a barrier between the voluntary and statutory sectors in communication. There was a suggestion that divisions sometimes exist and that this may be due to different ideas of "confidentiality". People working in the sector may need to understand inter-agency working differently, cross-agency training could help change this as would clear direction from the CSWO.

In summary the group identified the following priorities:

- CSWO as "champion" to help retain values, skills and motivation of social care workforce, in whatever setting they work.
- Clear definitions with a joint understanding of concept which are consistent regardless of role, qualification or sector engaged in.
- Support and resources to change the culture from top to bottom and bottom to top in ensure that new approaches are valued, inclusive and have ownership by all.
- Importance of joint training at all levels and integration of staff development opportunities.
- Develop wider range of effective ways to get service users and carers' participation.