

Welcome to the 16th edition of Workforce News, the newsletter of the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit.

Focus on Research and Events

In this issue, contributors focus on the launch of recent research and an analysis of Continuous Professional Development events

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A Gathering Storm? Procurement, re-tendering and the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce

Report Launch, June 2009

On 1st June 2009, Jackie Baillie MSP, Convener of the Cross Party Group for Learning Disabilities, launched the research report 'A Gathering Storm? Procurement, re-tendering and the voluntary sector social services workforce'.

The report was commissioned by the Workforce Unit and was undertaken by the Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde to assess the impact of the re-tendering of social care services on workforce morale and commitment in the voluntary sector.

In her opening speech, Jackie commended the report for giving voluntary sector front-line staff, who have key relationships with people receiving services, a voice in what is becoming one of the biggest issues affecting the sector at the moment.

She talked about voluntary sector staff who often 'go the extra mile' for the people they support and who get a huge element of satisfaction from their work. She said that the 'gathering storm' is that re-tendering of services becomes synonymous with cost-cutting - not quality, and that these cuts are passed down from local authorities to voluntary sector organisations.

The greatest cost in delivering social services is staffing. Consequentially, re-tendering can often result in undermining terms and conditions and a drop in pay. The real danger being that we lose the competent, confidence and valued workforce that we are striving to achieve.

Jackie discussed a variety of complimentary research findings that highlight the negative effects of re-tendering and the limited effect the process has in increasing the quality of services that people receive.

She urged the Scottish Government to distribute clear guidance about the process of re-tendering and local authorities to consider the cost/benefit of engaging in the process at all.

After presentation of the research findings (discussed in the last edition of Workforce News)...



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Continuous Professional Development Learning Events

Evaluation

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for staff in all settings and levels in the workforce is recognised as essential to the delivery of high quality social services (Skinner, 2005)¹. The Workforce Unit has a role to ensure that CPD is embedded across the voluntary sector workforce. In 2008/09 the Workforce Unit worked with Bev Mealyer of Learning Dynamic and the Social Services Learning Networks to design and deliver CPD events.

The learning outcomes for the events were:

- **To refresh participants' CPD knowledge**
- **To support participants to meet the SSSC Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) requirements**
- **To support participants to create learning cultures within their teams**
- **To support participants' leadership for learning and development.**

Eight events were delivered across the country to over one hundred and fifty participants. The Workforce Unit then carried out an evaluation to assess the impact of the learning events in supporting output driven CPD in the social services. This evaluation specifically focused on evaluating the impact of the learning events, if any, on:

- **Improving social services managers' ability to support their own CPD**
- **Improving social services managers' ability to support their staff's CPD**
- **Improving learning cultures within teams of social service workers to underpin the delivery of CPD.**

Evaluation sheets completed by participants at the end of the learning event were analysed. Participants were then e-mailed to request their Post Registration Learning and Training (PRTL) records completed after the events. Seven telephone interviews were then conducted with respondents.

Headline Findings were:

- The ratings of the trainer and the programme content were overwhelmingly positive.
- When asked what actions they planned to take forward from the learning event, the greatest number were around supporting CPD for their staff, followed by supporting their own CPD. Many respondents mentioned both their own, and their staff's CPD.
- There were an encouraging number of responses around developing learning cultures, not just within their own teams but across their organisations.
- Only four PRTL returns were received. None were completed on the standard SSSC form. Two met the required standard.
- When respondents were asked in the telephone interviews whether they had completed their SSSC/PRTL record on returning from the learning event and if not, why not, three spoke about the difficulties they had had in accessing the electronic form on the SSSC website. Two had not been able to find it at all and one had only found a PDF version which did not allow electronic completion. *On investigation the form was found to be four clicks deep on the SSSC website. This was fed back to the SSSC and the matter is now rectified.*
- Reported employer attitude to PRTL completion and CPD varied, ranging from employers that had not made clear that they value it, through a 'more stick than carrot approach', to employers clearly investing time and effort in supporting CPD.

This was a small scale research project that aimed to assess the impact of commissioned learning events. The learning outcomes for the events were highly ambitious and it was unlikely that a one day event would achieve all of them. The findings supported the literature on learning evaluation, in that participant satisfaction and some knowledge gain were recorded but evidence of workplace behaviour change and improvements to practice were limited.

Participant expectations of preparation, support and follow up from their managers was strikingly low. Yet ensuring that time and resources are invested in employer support structures and processes before, during and after the training is now widely accepted as being essential if learning is to 'stick' and practice to develop as a consequence of that learning (Skinner & Bell, 2007)². It is notable that the only robust evidence of workplace behaviour change and improvements to practice was generated from the two respondents whose managers had encouraged them to attend, had clear expectations of them bringing something back into the organisation and had followed up with them after the event.

¹Skinner, K. (2005) *Continuing Professional Development for the Social Services Workforce in Scotland*. Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education, Developing Learning Organisations, Discussion Paper 1, Dundee: SIESWE.

²Skinner, K. & Bell, L. (2007) *An Evaluation of the Children at the Centre Child Protection Training Programme*. Unpublished.

An Analysis of the Impact of the Voluntary Sector Development Fund

Headline Findings (2003- 2008)

The Voluntary Sector Development Fund (VSDF) has been available since early 2004. Its purpose is to contribute to the costs to voluntary sector social care employers associated with meeting phase one, and latterly, phase two qualification criteria set by the Scottish Social Services Council for registration and to assist employers in achieving a qualified workforce.

In 2008 the Workforce Unit carried out an analysis on behalf of the Scottish Government on the impact the fund has had in supporting the training and development needs associated with meeting the qualifications requirements for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council.

By December 2008:

- Over 2,000 qualifications had been supported through the fund.
- In the organisations that applied to the fund, staff requiring qualification for registration reduced from 81% in 2004 to 61% in 2007 before climbing slightly to 64% in 2008. Housing support managers were eligible for funding for the first time in 2008 which may explain this rise.
- A high percentage of applications in all years (58%-78%) have been from small and medium sized organisations (SMEs).
- A wide range of organisations made applications to the fund, reflecting the breadth of social service provision undertaken by the voluntary sector. Organisations working with people with disabilities accounted for over two thirds of applications, with those working with older people accounting for almost a quarter.
- A significant minority of applications (14%-34%) have been refused each year. Main reasons for refusal are applications for categories of staff that fall outside that particular year's eligible categories, organisations applying that are not voluntary organisations or applications requesting funding for things that the fund does not cover.

There will be another £1 million available from the Voluntary Sector Development Fund in 2009.

- Approximately £6 million pounds had been distributed to voluntary sector social care employers through the fund.

A Gathering Storm? Procurement, re-tendering and the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce (Cont.)

and the recommendations, the audience had the chance to reflect on the implications of the research findings and to ask a variety of questions to the panel speakers.

Report Recommendations

- gather intelligence on private sector providers
- consistency of advice on TUPE
- support for line managers
- joint working between employers and unions to highlight worst consequences of re-tendering
- more information disseminated to service users and families
- greater voice for service users and families on re-tendering decisions
- greater transparency on re-tendering decisions
- continuing to campaign for full-cost recovery

The panel included: Judith Midgley, Director, Workforce Unit; Mike Martin, Director, Joint Improvement Team, Scottish Government; Dr Ian Cunningham & Professor Dennis Nickson Strathclyde University and Jackie Baillie MSP.

The theme of whether or not to engage in the re-tendering process continued throughout the discussion.

Members of the audience highlighted that the voluntary sector is underpinned by an inherent ethos of collectivism and sharing; however re-tendering can often lead to tension in what would otherwise be strong collaborative relationships between provider organisations.

Authors of the report referred to a sense of inevitability about engaging in the re-tender process from re-search participants. They agreed that organisations must do what they can to get better at the process, whilst utilizing the powerful voice of specialist intermediary organisations, such as CCPS to lobby for change.

Further concerns were expressed regarding the inconsistency of approach to re-tendering in different local authority areas, with many audience participants citing different experiences of re-tendering.

Mike Martin noted the growing appetite for re-tendering in local authorities, and said that there had been a variety of different interpretations of the EU Procurement Regulations. He explained that his team, working in partnership with key stakeholders, was aiming to produce further guidance in August.

He stressed that this would not be prescriptive, but rather would aim to ensure that local authorities work in a way that is person centered and based on value and quality of care – not cost.

An audience member felt the issue was that the re-tendering process is disconnected from the people who are receiving services. If re-tendering was completed on a personalised basis, it would be easier for the workforce and organisations to understand the decisions being made.

A benefit of self directed care is that the person receiving support would be able to choose.

However, part of the 'gathering storm' may also be the inherent tensions between the rights of the people receiving support to those providing it – these issues remain unresolved.

Judith Midgley said that in commissioning the independent research, the Unit had sought to better understand the effects this process has on the workforce. The Unit is now working to implement some of the report's recommendations. Watch this space!

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