

Workforcenews

Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit
Issue 18 Winter 2009

Welcome to the 18th edition of Workforce News, the newsletter of the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit.

Focus on Policy

In this issue, contributors focus on how research can influence policy, our new policy advisory committee, the Care Accolades and a personalisation sharing practice story.

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The Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit supports and promotes the development of the sector's workforce in Scotland. The Unit is hosted by Community Care Providers Scotland in collaboration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). It is funded by the Scottish Government.



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Take Time to Shine! We talk to Heather Gray, Chief Executive of Who Cares? Scotland and Care Accolades judge about why you should consider applying to the Care Accolades this year.



How did you get involved in the Care Accolades?

I was invited to be a judge by SSSC and to see if we could involve a young person on the judging panel, which I did last year.

Why do you think the Care Accolades are important?

I think there is some fantastic work going on across Scotland which is not always recognised. We tend to hear when things go wrong, and don't hear enough about the really good services and excellent support that is provided to help people live their lives more fully.

How can winning a care accolade benefit an organisation?

I think it is great for morale and recognises really talented teams who give so much to others. It identifies people who do a good job and sets the standard for other organisations to aspire to.

Tell us about your experience of being a judge for the Care Accolades

Being a judge is a great experience but no one should think it's easy work!! There is a lot of paperwork and I was supporting a young person to judge the entries too. It's great to see the range of entries and the really creative work that is going on in Scotland. David and I had really similar thoughts on many of the entries but the good bit comes when the judges get together to share their thoughts and ideas. There is always lots of lively debate!

Voluntary sector organisations seem to have been under represented at the Care Accolades in past years - Do you think that it's important that they get involved?

I definitely think more voluntary

organisations should get involved in the Care Accolades. The voluntary sector has so much to offer and often has really innovative approaches to delivering good services. It's really important that more organisations enter to celebrate their work.

What advice can you give for Voluntary Sector organisations who want to apply?

I would say to them to take time to think about what makes their service special or what sets them apart from other organisations. Be clear and concise in how you describe what you do and don't be frightened to blow your own trumpet. A well presented submission makes a big difference, so take time to give good examples of the impact of what you do and how you know that your service makes a difference.

What type of applications stand out? - What type of information are you specifically looking for?

The applications that stand out are the ones where teams are particularly innovative and have found a different way to do things. I always notice applicants that can express the impact of their work and give appropriate examples. I also like applications that can demonstrate a real team approach and an ability to be proactive and creative. Also, seeing an application where people receiving a service are listened to and responded to is good.

Any other words of wisdom?

Be clear and concise and take time to get your message across. It's not enough to be just good at what you do, there needs to be some fairy dust - something that makes things extra special. Remember that the judging panel is varied so consider your service from all angles!

The Workforce Unit is offering support to help Voluntary Sector organisations write their applications this year.

Get in touch for more information!

How does evidence influence power, and what can researchers and / or commissioners of research do to maximise the impact of research on policy?

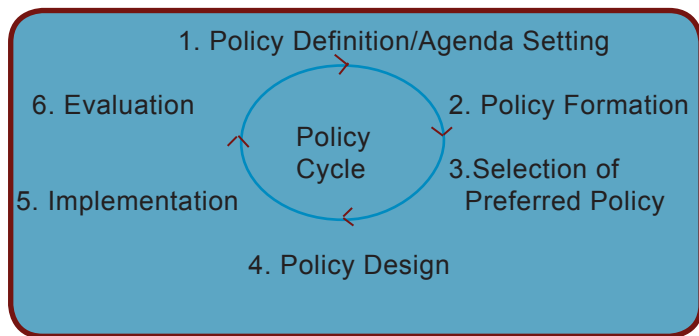
Could your organisation use research to influence policy?

Voluntary sector organisations may carry out research for a number of purposes; to gather evidence to inform future practice; to evaluate the impact of a project or initiative; or to assess the need for a particular intervention. This article will look at some of the issues that you might want to consider if your organisation is planning to use research to influence future policy.

How can research influence policy?

Policy makers use research and other forms of evidence (such as information from consultation or focus groups, expert knowledge, evaluation findings) to inform their decisions.

It can be useful to think of the policy process as a cyclical model, where research and other evidence can enter the process at any stage, and through a variety of different channels, whether it be commissioned directly by the policy maker in relation to a particular question, filtered through policy networks, or promoted via independent charities or lobby groups hoping to shape future policy or amend current interventions.



However, there are many other elements which also influence the development of policies, such as political or ideological views, interests, conventions or the influence of previous decisions.

What research is useful, and when?

Unsurprisingly, policy-makers requirements for research will be different at different parts of the policy process. Therefore, in order to achieve the greatest impact, it is important to consider both timing of research, and what information kind of information is likely to be influential at a particular time.

So, for example, if a government is beginning to scope an issue, your organisation may want to provide evidence of the magnitude of a problem.

Using research to influence policy: issues to consider

The following issues are worth considering if your organisation is planning to use research to influence policy or practice.

- **Timing** is critically important. Given that research often takes a long time to complete, will the findings still be relevant when they are published?
- **Who and what are you trying to influence?** And how will you use your research to gain this influence?
- **Political factors** can influence how receptive an administration is to research evidence. For example,
- **Relevance of research** – what are you trying to prove? What research has been done already? Have you carried out a literature review? Will your research add anything new? Will it add anything to the general debate? Is your organisation best placed to do the research, or could a partnership approach increase your influence?
- **Research design** – have you ensured there methodology is ethical, robust and there are no potential conflicts of interest?
- **Communication with policy makers** and building good links can help
- **Dissemination** – research reports that just sit on a shelf are unlikely to have any influence. Developing a strong communication and dissemination plan (with appropriate funding) from the outset will help make sure your research reaches the right audiences.

Varied methods of communication can be helpful (eg accessible summaries, events, media, publications, web based databases, journals, etc) to help target the information to the needs of different audiences, and ensure accessibility.

Finally it is also important to remember that research and other evidence generally has a cumulative effect on the policy debate – it is unusual for one piece of research to make a visible impact in terms of change of policy, but it may add to the overall debate and influence thinking in the future.

The Workforce Gets Personal

Sharing Practice: ENABLE Scotland

The shared ambition of personalisation is to put people first in the reform of public services. The overarching goal is that people feel, and really are, in control of their lives and the services that they receive. With this change brings a host of opportunities and challenges - not least for the social care workforce.

ENABLE Scotland has been involved in the Glasgow East Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) pilot programme for personalisation over the past year. In this article, Donna Thompson, Manager of Operations and Development, ENABLE Scotland, talks about how staff are changing in response to the personalisation agenda.

Donna explains that the underlying ethos of personalisation is not new for ENABLE Scotland, but that *"the transition to personalised care is more like an evolutionary process for us. Our strategic aims have a specific focus on ensuring that people with learning disabilities have choice and control. We have been doing some of this for a long time."*

This proved to be one of the main difficulties for staff, who felt they were being as person centred as they could be within the existing infrastructure. Accordingly, they were unsure about what was being asked of them.

Donna notes that there were lots of fears and anxieties in the team leader group which made the process of helping staff prepare for personalisation difficult, *"For me, it was like walking up to a highly polished door and banging straight into it. I was so enthusiastic about personalisation and really believed in it; I just thought people would be on board straight away."*

Moving from these tentative first steps to helping staff embrace the essence of personalisation, here Donna describes the staff journey so far....

Nov. 2008 - Jan 2009

Staff participated in intensive support plan training which included listening and asking questions of key speakers with vital experience in putting personalisation into practice. Involvement in training, and exploring some of the arising issues proved to be a particularly poignant experience for staff.

Regular meetings for team leaders were also arranged. This took place on a monthly basis (at least) helping managers talk through some of the challenges they were facing, sharing ideas and possible solutions.

A communications group was established and produced materials so that people using services and frontline staff alike had a shared understanding of the principles on personalisation. It was a particular focus to be clear about what personalisation means, so that everyone has a shared understanding of the principles and practice. Articulating this was really

helpful in steering staff in the right direction.

Feb. / March 2009

It helped that there was endorsement for personalisation from local authorities and the heads of social work. This provided added impetus for change. Staff began to realise that whether or not they like it, personalisation is coming. At this stage ENABLE offered some pro bono planning services to local authorities.

The next big step was developing a person centred recruitment group. This firmly put the people we support in the driving seat, choosing their own support workers. Generic support staff job descriptions are now a thing of the past for ENABLE Scotland.

May. 2009

We completed our first two Resource Allocation System (RAS) documents. We also held a national conference for members to help them to explore the many different elements of personalisation. We felt it was important to keep people as informed as possible to changes that really could have a huge impact on their lives.

June/July. 2009

We completed RAS forms for 3 applicants. At this point we realised that strong leadership was crucial to the success of assisting staff to move forward, and appointed a personalisation Team Leader who is now really helping to build capacity within the staff teams.

October. 2009

At last, five RAS forms were presented to the Resource Allocation Group and indicative budgets were granted!

Donna says, *"It has been a long process for ENABLE Scotland, but it was really important to take this time to work on getting things right. Without the endorsement from staff, we couldn't have come this far. Bringing them along on this journey has been vital to help them see what the future really could, and should, look like for the people we support."*

Donna is quite realistic in recognising that there are still a number of development issues to work on e.g. *"What does back room staffing have to look like for personalisation to happen?"*, *"Will staff training need to be delivered in a different way?"* etc.

However, with continued support from staff and with strong leadership she believes that personalisation can be a reality for everyone.

Watch this space!!

The Workforce Unit is commissioning an exploratory study to assess the current capacity of the voluntary sector workforce to deliver on the aspirations of the personalisation agenda. It will also aim to identify the functions, skills and behaviours (demonstrating underpinning ethos/values) required. More information is available on our website.

Responding to Consultations

We urge all of our stakeholders to take part in consultations; it can be a really effective way to help you influence policy. The following tips may help you to put together your responses.

- **Be Brief**

Use short sentences to explain each point you want to make. You can always add more detail afterwards.

- **Focus on what is really important to you**

Put the issues you care most about first, so that your concerns are listed in order of priority. If you want to make more detailed comments you could put them in an appendix to your response or in a separate document

- **Think of the implications for your organisation**

Providing specific examples of how your organisation may be affected by proposed changes are vital for making a convincing argument. If appropriate, think about estimating time and cost implications in your response.

- **Provide evidence or examples**

If you're responding by post or email, send in copies of supporting documents rather than information about where to find them.

- **Send your response as soon as possible**

The earlier you send in your views, the longer the consulting body will have to consider them. This is particularly important if you are providing new information or evidence.

- **Reply to the questions asked**

If the consultation asks for your views on particular questions, clearly state which questions you're answering before setting out your views.

- **Tell them who you are**

You should indicate whether you are replying as an individual or on behalf of a group of people. Your response may be made public but if you prefer it to remain private you can make this clear in your reply.

Workforce Unit Policy Advisory Committee

The Workforce Unit seeks to influence a variety of policy agendas in Scotland. The development of our Policy Advisory Committee provides another avenue to help us fulfil our aims.

One of the Workforce Unit's four strategic priorities is to, "Improve the contribution made by voluntary sector social services organisations to the national agenda, through an advocacy and representation role"

Accordingly, we regularly engage with a variety of voluntary sector leaders to learn about and promote the specific strategic workforce development needs of voluntary sector social services providers.

To assist this, we have established a new Policy Advisory Committee to help ensure that the interests of voluntary sector social service providers can be represented as accurately as possibly within this national policy agenda.

The Policy Advisory Committee has had its first meeting and the following issues emerged:

- Tensions between the tendering / procurement agenda (generally seen to be about lowering costs), and the drive towards a qualified, regulated workforce.
- Funding issues (particularly difficulties in relation to short term funding, and the impact this has on workforce planning and investment in staff development).
- Registration issues & workforce planning – practicalities at local level
- Broader contextual issues which impact on workforce planning and development – particular interest was expressed regarding wider Health Sector issues.

More information and updates from the Policy Advisory Committee will be available via the Workforce Unit website.

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