

Welcome to the 19th edition of Workforce News, the newsletter of the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit.

## Focus on knowledge management

In this issue, contributors focus on developments linked to finding and sharing knowledge to inform practice.

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Workforce Unit 2010

## Sharing Knowledge, Improving Practice, Changing Lives

### A knowledge management strategy and action plan for social services

We all know that there is a lot of really good and innovative work going on in the social services at the moment, but where is it? What is it? How can it be replicated across the country? And how can we celebrate a job well done?

The knowledge management strategy for social services - *Sharing Knowledge, Improving Practice, Changing Lives* - aims to make this information available so that the workforce is more knowledgeable, prepared and confident in the work that they do.

The strategy was developed by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and the Institute for Innovation and Research in Social Services (IRISS), in partnership with a network of organisations across the social services. It was launched by the Minister for Children and Young People, Adam Ingram MSP on March 17th.

Knowledge management is one of those concepts that doesn't immediately capture the imagination - it can be wide, far reaching and can feel very abstract. However, the summary strategy aims to put all of this into perspective.

Put simply, the strategy is about making sure the right people have the right knowledge at the right time. It is about finding, sharing and storing knowledge so that others can make use of it.

The strategy itself describes 3 main outputs:

- The Social Services Knowledge Scotland website ([www.ssk.org.uk](http://www.ssk.org.uk)) which will deliver a range of information, learning resources and tools for sharing knowledge. **Please note:** you can also

apply for your **free** Athens password on SSKS.

- A network of organisations known as the Social Services Managed Knowledge Network (MKN).
- A programme to develop people's skills in accessing, sharing and using knowledge (often referred to as information literacy).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is now an essential component of working in the social services sector. In essence, this means, 'ongoing learning and development to improve and extend professional practice through an individual's career'. Ultimately, contributing directly to improving the quality of care received by service users.

The knowledge management strategy supports the workforce to engage in CPD through providing access to information and learning, and encouraging the more organised use of evidence based practice. The consistent application of knowledge to practice will help practitioners deliver better support to people who use services and carers.

It also outlines a strand that focuses on access to good quality and reliable information and knowledge for people who use services (and practitioners) under the premise that supporting people to find, share and use these types of knowledge can empower them to make decisions and find their own solutions.

Crucially, the strategy highlights a number of practical illustrations of how the action plan can, and will, support day to day working in the social services sector.

# Sharing Knowledge, Improving Practice, Changing Lives (continued from page 1).

The summary strategy and action plan is available from Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS):

<http://tinyurl.com/SharingKnowledge>

In this section of the website, you will also find a knowledge management topic room which has a wide range of information outlining how the different strands of the strategy fit together. It includes a number of promotional flyers that you can order for use within your own organisation:

<http://www.sks.org.uk/flyers.aspx>

NHS Education for Scotland and IRISS are also developing an online community of practice called 'Bringing knowledge management together'. The community will include a number of different templates, specialist libraries, toolkits, tips and techniques for use and discussion. You need your Athens password to access this community. Apply here:

<http://www.sks.org.uk/login.aspx>

The essence is that this will provide a useful new way to connect people together to share experiences and to develop new ideas facilitating cross-sector collaboration

and the beginnings of a learning culture throughout the social services sector. **So, check it out. Get involved, and give it a try!**

Remember that the Workforce Unit has a specialist enquiry service and would be happy to provide more information about any of these initiatives - Just get in touch!

## What about SMEs?

For a small organisation, thinking about knowledge management can be daunting - it can be difficult to see how it applies to you - or you might simply feel like it means more work.

Over the next year, the Workforce Unit hopes to work with SMEs to help you think about how knowledge management could help improve outcomes and make your organisation even more effective.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Lisa Pattoni on [lisa.pattoni@ccpscotland.org](mailto:lisa.pattoni@ccpscotland.org).

## Information Literacy

### Learning how to FIND and SHARE information

The Workforce Development Network Events run in March this year focused on information literacy - these are skills that enable you to access and share information in any system and apply it in practice.

A number of participants at the network events noted handy hints and keyboard shortcuts as the most useful things that they learned on the day.

Here, we have compiled a number of top tips for you to think about when using your computer, and when using the internet to search for information.

#### General keyboard shortcuts

- Highlight a piece of text. Press the 'control' (CTRL) button and press 'c' to copy this text.
- Press 'CTRL' & 'v' to paste this text where you want it
- Press 'CTRL' & 'z' to undo your last action
- Press 'CTRL' & '+' to zoom in and make the screen bigger
- Press 'CTRL' & '-' to zoom in and make the screen smaller
- Press 'CTRL' & 'ESC' to open up the **Start** menu

#### Using a search engine like 'google'

- use quotation (") marks around your search term to refine your search i.e. find documents only containing those words
- use the minus sign (-) before the word to narrow your search
- broaden your search looking for all variations of a word using (\*) e.g. "child\*" which would find words such as children, childhood, childish etc.
- Combine search terms using AND, OR, and NOT e.g.

down syndrome AND employment	will look for all instances with both 'down syndrome' and 'employment'	helps to limit your search
down's syndrome OR down syndrome	will search for all instances with either 'down's' OR 'down'	helps to broaden your search
down syndrome NOT adult	will search for all instances that includes 'down syndrome' but NOT 'adult'	helps to limit your search

# The Managed Knowledge Network and the Workforce Unit

## How does it all fit together?

Some say the key to successful knowledge management is to make links between people. As such, an important output from *Sharing Knowledge, Improving Practice, Changing Lives*, is the development of a network of organisations that are committed to improving the management of knowledge in their own organisations and wider - the Managed Knowledge Network (MKN).

The MKN is essentially a forum that brings people together to share knowledge and experiences. We have been involved in this development since 2008 and have signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines our role in supporting the knowledge management strategy.

### Why get involved?

The more organisations involved in the MKN, the greater chance we have to develop a strong culture of sharing and using knowledge that will support the social services sector.

Organisations also receive the following benefits:

- Support and guidance to develop and implement your own knowledge management strategy
- Access to knowledge management learning materials and templates
- Information literacy and sharing knowledge (communities of practice) training
- Access to your own information and learning resources through Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS)
- Ability to re-use and re-package SSKS information and learning resources in your own services
- Access to technology to build community websites using the Community Builder Toolkit
- Get advice and support from a network of likeminded colleagues.

For more information about getting involved, please contact Susan Lindner at [knowledge@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:knowledge@nes.scot.nhs.uk)

### What does it mean in practice?

Ann Wales (NHS Education for Scotland) and Susan Lindner (NHS Education for Scotland & IRISS) hosted a session with the Workforce Unit to determine how using knowledge management process and practices could help us deliver our 4 core outcomes.

**Information** - Our information products are helping us to improve the ability of voluntary sector social services employers to engage with the national workforce agenda. The support from the MKN has helped us maximise the impact of this.

**Intelligence** - Research carried out to improve the knowledge and picture we have of the voluntary sector social services workforce is now (and will continue to be) available through SSKS/Learning Exchange which has enabled us to reach, inform and influence the wider sector, and government.

**Promotion** - We want to support the embedding of knowledge management in SMEs over the next year. This will assist SMEs to improve their effectiveness and will enable them to better promote themselves and the specific contributions they make to the social services sector.

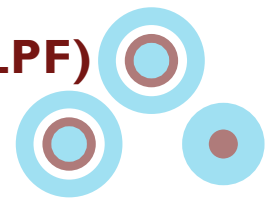
**Policy** - Using the community builder toolkit (CBT) we will offer an online platform for discussion and formulation of policy positions and responses to consultations. This will enable us to better support the impact voluntary sector organisations are able to make on the national policy agenda.

This year, we are very conscious that we have to demonstrate the impact of our work. The session helped us identify some knowledge management practices that could be improved so that they have a stronger impact on the ground for our stakeholders. We also were able to consider the sustainability of the Workforce Unit knowledge base and services.

Unit Director, Judith Midgley notes,

*“This session really taught us that knowledge management wasn’t going to be something ‘extra’ that we had to do. It really is just about making sure we are as effective as we can be.”*

# Sharing Practice: Local Practitioners Forums (LPF)



**‘If we can work together, we can make a real difference to the local services we deliver’**

Shelley Ferguson, LPF Facilitator West Dunbartonshire

**A**nd if the evidence is anything to go by, she is right.

There are now 14 local practitioner forums (LPFs) active across Scotland and another 16 other local areas are at varying stages of development. These forums provide an opportunity for practitioners to discuss and provide comment on local and national issues, consider Changing Lives and the implications for practice and identify and develop local solutions.

Here is the story of West Dunbartonshire’s take on a Local Practitioners Forum, how it got off the ground and is successfully involving participants from voluntary organisations.....

There was a real need in West Dunbartonshire to have a forum which enabled people to express themselves in a safe environment where they would be listened to and supported.

As such, two groups came together to support the broad vision of providing an opportunity to learn, highlight good practice and service development as well as highlight gaps and areas where change needs to happen.

The group is West Dunbartonshire’s Local Practitioner Learning Network.

As with everything, getting things off the ground can be tricky - the Local Practitioner Forum tool kit and the aims and objectives from Learning Network West provided useful guidance and a base for developing the work of a forum.

Both place a strong emphasis upon the value of collaboration and partnership, the need to learn from one another and develop services which are sensitive to the needs of local people and both complement the local strategy to improve service delivery. The group is also being supported by Julie Thomson, the Development Officer from the Learning Network West and by the Scottish Government.

The forum is still building its membership but there is currently a core group of approximately 26 representatives from across the voluntary and private sectors, local authorities and health.

In the climate of growing competitiveness, it can be difficult to work together. However, it is important to focus on the benefits

of collaborative working. Shelley notes that,

*“there will always be debate and tensions when attempting to facilitate a group like this. However, working in an integrated way with professionals from various backgrounds, and sometimes, different philosophies can bring fresh perspectives that are beneficial to all.”*

And that’s why people get into social care, after all – to make change a reality.

The group has a further aim to provide staff with a voice where issues can be discussed and taken forward. On a practical level, some teams rotate attendance and feedback to other team members and projects, which helps spread the responsibility for participation.

The group is taking things one step further - also producing a quarterly newsletter which provides information, conference reports and news items within the local area.

For further information on LPFs please visit the Local Practitioner Forum Pages on the Learning Networks Website:

<http://www.learningnetworks.org.uk>

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