

Self-Directed Support: Draft National Strategy

Response from the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit

6th May 2010

About this response

[The Workforce Unit](#) supports and promotes the development of the voluntary sector's workforce in Scotland through a range of information products, an enquiry service, events, research, networks and by influencing the national workforce agenda. The Unit is funded by the Scottish Government until 2011.

This response is informed by consultation with the Workforce Unit's Policy Advisory Committee and through a voluntary sector consultation event facilitated by the Unit.

Background

The Workforce Unit welcomes this consultation on self-directed support. The voluntary sector has played an important role in the development of personalised approaches and person centred planning within care and support, and we envisage that voluntary sector provider organisations, who currently employ approximately one third of all social services workers in Scotland, will be crucial to the success of this strategy.

This consultation response will focus on the following areas relating to workforce development:

- Organisational transformation
- Workforce development and training
- Support for workforce development

Organisational Transformation [*Question 9: Gaps within the strategy*]

Much of the focus of the draft strategy is on the role of Personal Assistants (PAs) in delivering personalised services. However existing service providers from across the voluntary, private and statutory sectors will have an important role to play in the delivery of more personalised services. Recent experience from the Edinburgh re-tender showed that, when given Direct Payments, many service users chose to remain with their existing provider.

Therefore it would be helpful for the strategy to consider and acknowledge the role of service provider organisations in delivering self-directed support. While many organisations are already working towards personalised models of delivery, it is important to note that there will be a significant transitional period required in order to redesign and develop systems to effectively support individual budgets and to manage and develop a more flexible workforce. This transitional period will require time, investment and careful planning, and we would suggest that too quick a move to a system of 'opt-out' could cause significant problems for service providers.

In addition to the 'cultural shift' which the strategy identifies, there is a huge change management agenda. Organisations will need support to develop new business models, to manage the transition between current commissioning practice and more personalised commissioning, and to develop sustainable service delivery models within the system of self-directed support that can respond to changing needs. The HR and employment law implications of transforming the workforce will be huge, and these should be acknowledged within the strategy.

Funding is also a concern for service providers. The experience on many voluntary sector providers is that Direct Payments are not always set at levels which enable the service user to retain the current level of support provided by an organisation.

However there may also be opportunities for existing voluntary sector organisations to develop support to Personal Assistants, for example through shared training, support and supervision arrangements or providing sickness cover. Recognising the role of voluntary sector providers within the vision for a self-directed support system and highlighting some of the transitional issues could significantly enhance this strategy.

Workforce Development and Training [*Question 2: priorities for training strategy*]

The strategy states "self-directed support arrangements need to be fair and equitable, ensuring rates for SDS packages of support are fit for purpose and take account of key quality factors such as training". We welcome this statement; however suggest that training funds in particular should be ring-fenced within any self-directed support arrangement, and that a percentage figure should be agreed nationally, to ensure an equitable system. The "National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce In Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005-2010" states that "*commissioning agencies and service providers should work towards identifying 3% of service costs as a commitment to training and development*"¹. We suggest that a similar commitment (preferably mandatory, rather than optional) to support workforce development costs will be required within the new system of self-directed support.

In relation to priorities for a training strategy, it is important to recognise the investment that is being made in the existing workforce, particularly through the Scottish Social Services Council's registration agenda, and to ensure that the self-directed support strategy does not run in opposition to the development of a confident, competent workforce.

There is concern within the voluntary sector that the self-directed support strategy could inadvertently encourage the development of a two-tier workforce, with

¹ Scottish Executive (2005), *National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland*, p15

employees of service providers having to meet the registration requirements set by the SSSC, while the PA sector develops as a parallel, unqualified and unregulated workforce on poorer terms and conditions. As well as sending conflicting messages about the value of the workforce and reducing options for career development and movement across the sector, there is a danger that increasing reliance on the PA workforce may drive down commissioned costs, reducing the funding available for organisations to support workforce development, as well as the choices available to service users.

We welcome recommendation 15, which states that the *Scottish Government should consider the ways in which PAs can access training, how a direct payment can be used to provide training and the range of responsibilities placed on local authorities to ensure a sufficiently trained PA workforce*, but suggest that these issues should also be considered in relation to the wider social care workforce.

In terms of existing training, voluntary sector representatives at our consultation meetings agreed with the draft strategy that the development of self-directed support requires “*staff at all levels to be trained in the values and principles of self-directed support*”, and some suggested that re-focusing the sector on a shared values base would be particularly helpful. However, there was a feeling that the strategy for training and development must span the whole sector, and not encourage a two-tiered approach. There may also be issues for the ways in which qualifications are delivered. For example, the current SVQ system may cause problems for assessment within the homes of service users. It would also be useful to clarify exactly where responsibility for ensuring a suitably qualified PA workforce will lie: will this be with the recipient of the Direct Payment, or with the Local Authority?

Support for Development of the Workforce

We welcome the recommendation to develop a national support organisation for Personal Assistants, and hope that this organisation will help to ensure a well qualified PA workforce. We suggest that similar investment should be made to support service provider organisations to respond to the self-directed support agenda. As outlined above, there will be a huge agenda for organisations in terms supporting and promoting the development of a more flexible workforce and putting in place the systems and supports to ensure that this workforce can operate effectively.