

ALL CHANGE

An examination of the changing context for the development of the voluntary sector social services workforce in Scotland. Janet Miller, Director Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit

There are political, social and demographic drivers which are forcing changes across the public sector and in particular social work and social care

Joyce Lishman (2005)

Just a few weeks ago, the First Minister..... gave us a clear reminder of the pace at which the world is changing through technological, environmental, demographic and social changes.

Tom McCabe, Scottish Parliament, June 15 2006

INTRODUCTION

Voluntary Sector Social Services in Scotland have a vital part to play in the huge and exciting change agenda which has recently culminated in an implementation plan for 'Changing Lives, the 21st Century Review of Social Work'. This implementation plan applies to all sectors, statutory, voluntary and private, and to some extent the whole social service workforce. It is not just about social workers. One of the fundamental beliefs of the plan is that doing more of the same won't work. This is because things have changed, and are continuing to do so. This paper seeks to examine the context of these changes from the political, social (including economic and technological) and demographic perspectives and to examine the implications of this context for the voluntary sector, especially in relation to the development of the voluntary sector social services workforce in Scotland.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Politically change in voluntary sector social services reflects change that is being experienced throughout the provision of service. Tom McCabe, the minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, spoke in the Scottish Parliament on June 15 2006 about all public services 'sweeping away the obstacles to more cohesive service delivery' and emphasised the five principles of public sector reform outlined by Jack McConnell, First Minister, earlier in the year. These are:

- User focus and personalisation
- Quality and innovation
- Efficiency and productivity
- Joining up
- Accountability

These principles are reflected in one form or another in most of the reports coming from the Scottish Executive that relate to social services in Scotland ranging from The National Strategy for the Development of the Social Services Workforce (2005), to 'Changing Lives' (2006), 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (2005) and the recently published 'National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce (2006). All see the voluntary sector as an essential partner in the future of both planning and implementing change according to these principles.

Of particular relevance to the voluntary sector is an interest in political circles about the Social Enterprise Economy. Social enterprises are defined as businesses which can compete in the open market for contracts or sales but combine trading with social, community or environmental aims. They are organisations with some kind of social objective, some level of trading and in which any surplus is redistributed to the people being served. It is possible to be a social enterprise and operate as a charitable company limited by guarantee i.e. as an organisation that must register with the newly established OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Register). Political interest centres around the operation of such enterprises along business lines, generating income as well as producing social benefit. These are not organisations that depend upon grants for their existence but, through the Scottish Executive's wish to create an environment in which social enterprise can flourish, there is business support and finance available.

Devolution is also a political factor to take into account. Keating et al (2003) indicate a greater use of consultation and inclusive committee structures in Scotland since devolution and this does seem to be born out in practice. For example, there was a thorough and wide-scale consultation exercise in relation to 'Changing Lives', including the establishment of a User and Carer Panel which wrote an introduction to the report.

Devolution, of course, did not herald the beginning of Scotland's differing arrangements from the rest of the UK. Prior to this Scotland already had its own legal, educational and religious systems firmly entrenched, making it possible for Scotland to follow a rather different course. For example, Kilbrandon's (1964) philosophy of a preventative and educational approach to problems, the needs of the child as paramount and the establishment of Children's Hearings has established a way of tackling and seeing problems which has influenced subsequent policy in the whole social service arena.

Even where policies and legislation appear, on the face of it, to be very similar to the rest of the UK, devolution facilitates implementation in a way which suits the needs of Scotland. Registration of the workforce and the establishment of Councils of Social Service is a case in point. The four countries of the UK have established Councils and adopted the same 'Codes of Practice'. They are all also establishing registration of their workforces as a way of developing competence and confidence. However, Scotland is developing its own qualifications criteria and timetable for registration to meet the needs of service users, carers and the Sector in Scotland. There is a huge emphasis upon a qualified workforce whose competence in practice is assessed to rigorous national standards.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Socially there are changes in the way in which the customer/consumer/service user is seen as not only the focus of service provision but as a major contributor in determining how services are provided and delivered. In Social Services a person centred approach, pioneered and driven by the voluntary sector, is advocated as the basis of service provision and as a way of promoting equality and inclusion, cornerstones of Executive policy and embodied in the National Care Standards.

Economically these are not affluent times, they are times of making the best use of the resources we have, with a few extra for promoting a change agenda and somewhat fewer around for developing the workforce in ways we have been used to. For the voluntary sector a more equitable distribution of funds would make the world of difference and so would greater opportunities to share training opportunities with other organisations and sectors. Some encouraging approaches to this are already being advocated, for example several Councils and voluntary organisations share some of their training opportunities, but much more fundamental and radical change is needed if resources are to be truly optimised. Indeed it would help enormously if there was a complete revamp of the way funding is allocated and distributed, without the limitations imposed by current short term funding, without multiple commissioning arrangements and without most Executive funding going to local authorities with only an implicit understanding that there will be some redistribution to other sectors. Some lessons can be learned from the child care partnerships and hopefully carried into the development of Learning Networks and the 'Changing Lives' implementation groups.

Technological advances provide opportunities for using distance learning and the web as a resource. Already, Changing Lives has resulted in the development of a new and very useful website:

www.socialworkscotland.org.uk. Ballantyne and Quinn (2006) examine the role that newly emerging, participatory web-based services might play in supporting informal learning in the workplace. There is huge potential for the development of communities of practice, for the use of e-portfolio systems and using podcasts to update staff on new legislative and procedural requirements. With new technology come challenges to be coped with, challenges to traditional modes of leadership and learning. Voluntary sector organisations, with their long history of risk taking and innovation, are ideally placed to embrace these challenges which have the potential for sharing across sectoral and disciplinary boundaries, and for workers to communicate and network with one another about professional issues without reference to hierarchical and other structural limitations.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Demographic change is closely allied with social change, both part of it and a contributor to it. Arber and Ginn (2004) indicate that between 1971 and 2001 there was a 30% increase in the male population over 65 and a 13% increase in the female population over 65 in the UK and more than a 100% increase in the population over 85. The social service workforce is also ageing; not only this but, according to Scotland's National Workforce Group (NWG, 2006) the social service workforce is older, on average, than the aggregate Scottish workforce. This coupled with competition from other sectors, low birth rates and an increase in immigration from non-English speaking countries, requires a radical change in thinking in relation both to providing services and to recruiting and retaining the workforce. Perhaps it is time to get away from a doom and gloom scenario in relation to these factors, what Arber and Ginn (2004) refer to as apocalyptic demography. They point out that though there may be more older people, they have in general never been healthier or more active. The over 65 age group contains the largest number of carers as well as the largest number of service users, and also provides immense amounts of practical and financial support to younger members of the population. Instead of the 'burden' of the old and ageing workforce it is time to think more constructively about harnessing the potential activity of older workers and volunteers, and to reducing inequalities. Looking more positively at an ageing workforce and an ageing population can lead for example to recruitment policies that target older workers or those changing their career.

The social service workforce is also traditionally largely a female workforce, with, according to the NWG, men representing less than a fifth, 19%, of the workforce. Things are changing however with a rise in male employment of 70% since 1994, with the proportion of men being greatest in the voluntary sector. The voluntary organisation, Kibble, has advocated a 'men can care' campaign, which has resulted in a positive recruitment drive to attract men to the social service sector. One of the recommendations of 'Something to believe in' (ScER 2005), a report on recruitment in the Scottish voluntary sector, is to 'Target recruitment of older, male and ethnic minority workers'.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The voluntary sector has been and continues to be in a position both to respond to this context and to influence it. Key threads of policy reform are generally embedded in the way voluntary sector organisations operate; change, user focus, quality and innovation, efficiency and productivity, accountability and joining up are all part of the ethos of our creative and responsive approach to providing services. There is more to be done, however, and the voluntary sector can both collaborate and lead the way in this. In terms of joining up, for instance, possibilities exist for collaborating more with one another and with other sectors, especially in terms of recruitment and development of the workforce. We need, for example, to build upon projects that are in place in some areas where there is a one stop shop for recruitment to the social services sector and partnerships for training the workforce.

There are some developments in which the voluntary sector must ensure that it plays a full, active and developmental role. The development of Learning Networks, Sector Skills Councils, the groups being established as a part of 'Changing Lives Implementation', and the many activities of the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit, present the best opportunities for a long time to respond to and influence the context in which we operate, and the way in which services are delivered and financed now and in the future.

Learning Networks are being established on a regional basis to achieve 4 main aims:

- help partners achieve workforce planning and development
- develop systems to embed employee development for all social service workers
- improve quantity, quality and diversity of practice learning opportunities
- support partner organisations in meeting registration requirements for their staff

All social service employers, private, voluntary and statutory have an equally important part to play in Learning Networks, as do providers of higher, further and vocational education. Learning Networks have the potential to be a real force for change in terms of promoting a learning culture, developing our workforces collaboratively and with a more equitable distribution of finance for learning and development. Voluntary organisations are already well represented at regional level and need to keep up this impetus, also ensuring full involvement in developments at local and national levels.

Sector Skills Councils represent a way for employers, including those in the voluntary sector, to be involved in the skills agenda for their sector. Skills for Care and Development, the Scottish section of which is located within SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council) represents the social service sector in relation to the following aims:

- reducing skills gaps and shortages
- improving productivity, business and public service performance
- increasing opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on equal opportunities
- improving learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards

The Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit is currently in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding with Skills for Care and Development to ensure an optimum voluntary sector role in future developments.

The implementation of 'Changing Lives' presents further opportunities for voluntary sector involvement in the current changing context. The Implementation Plan (Scottish Executive 2006) is supported by the work of several groups and five change programmes. The groups include a Cabinet Delivery group, the Social Work Services Forum (bringing together a broad range of stakeholders, including the voluntary sector) and Practitioner Fora. The detail of implementation will be the task of the five change programmes, led by external chairs and each supported by a group of people with expertise in the subject and by the Scottish Executive Social Work Services Policy Division. The five change programmes are:

- Performance Improvement
- Service development
- Workforce development
- Practice governance
- Leadership and management

It is worth looking at each of these workstreams in terms of the implications for the voluntary sector and its potential contribution, though it should be born in mind that the implementation plan is only recently published and that most programme groups have not yet convened.

In relation to Performance Improvement with its focus on self assessment tools, reducing bureaucracy and agreeing national priorities, the voluntary sector brings the ethos of a person-centred, inclusive approach, emphasising that 'improvement' must include an emphasis on meeting the complex needs of service users and involving them at the forefront of the planning process. Historically the voluntary sector has pioneered person centred approaches and has usually had the advantage of being able to develop without accompanying huge bureaucracies. These factors can provide a creative approach to performance improvement. In turn, the development of a self assessment tool and national standards for performance improvement is likely to benefit organisations in all sectors.

The Service Development programme is chaired jointly by statutory and voluntary sector representatives, emphasising immediately a partnership approach to this workstream. The voluntary sector is likely to bring contributions and questions to be answered about improving partnerships, access to services and service re-design according to a person-centred ethos. Examples of best practice in the voluntary sector can contribute to this agenda, for example Aberlour's Running: Other Choices (ROC) project in Glasgow, which was the overall winner in 2006 of SSSC's Care Accolades. The development of new commissioning models is also relevant, with a voluntary sector plea not to confuse procurement, with its focus on efficiency and getting the best deal (which often means the cheapest deal) and commissioning, which must maintain a focus on personalisation and meeting service user need in the best possible ways. This debate is seen as key to developing a commissioning model which is fit for purpose for social services in Scotland.

Workforce Development underpins progress towards a competent, confident and valued workforce. The Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit will play an active part in representing a voluntary sector perspective in this group through consultation and collaboration with its stakeholders. The Unit's workforce development network has already contributed to the development of funding, qualifications and workforce planning guidance which will assist in the implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce and in building effective teams. Through this workstream it is hoped that the implications for 'paraprofessional' roles for the voluntary sector will be examined, taking into account the multitude of tasks which are currently undertaken by skilled and knowledgeable workers performing a wide range of supportive roles. The collection of workforce data is important in developing a quantitative and qualitative picture of the workforce and the voluntary sector will both contribute to and benefit from the development of such a picture.

Practice Governance has always been and is increasingly of relevance to the voluntary sector. In recent years many organisations have evolved from small-scale providers at a very local level to becoming much larger concerns, with contracts with local authorities and weighty decisions to be made both in relation to practice governance and overall governance of their organisations. Whilst organisational governance is not necessarily part of this workstream, it is worth mentioning that SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) with partner UK CVOs has developed National Occupational Standards and an accompanying toolkit for Trustees and Management Committee members, leading the way in this important area. This work can inform the development of further tools and also work in relation to citizen leadership. The voluntary sector has worked hard to enable service users to represent themselves and this work too is of relevance to governance. For example, Who Cares? Scotland facilitates the participation of children and young people in many areas that relate to governance, risk assessment and citizen leadership.

In terms of leadership and management current trends towards generic leadership are balanced in the voluntary sector by a continuing recognition of the value of leaders who contribute their expertise in specialist areas, for example in the field of mental health, and recognition of leadership at every level and in every size of organisation. One of the issues for the future seems to be to enable the voice of the specialist or the leader of a small organisation, who may not occupy a prominent leadership role in relation to large-scale statutory provision, to continue to be heard and seen as relevant. These leaders can act as champions for different client groups whose needs may otherwise get lost, and as creative forces for change. 'Leading to Deliver', leadership development sponsored by the Scottish Executive, has been a useful mechanism for disseminating a transformational leadership approach to leaders in all sectors. It is hoped that this course, or something which extends even more broadly across professional and disciplinary boundaries, will continue in the future as a means of promoting collaboration and leadership in all sectors.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the current context and drivers for voluntary sector social services in Scotland, their implications for the voluntary sector and some of the current mechanisms through which the voluntary sector will continue to play a part in future developments. Political, social and demographic drivers have meant that it is totally unrealistic to continue to provide more of the same. Contributing to the development of learning networks, Sector Skills Councils and the implementation of 'Changing Lives' (Report of the 21st Century Review of Social Work) present opportunities for the voluntary sector to continue to drive forward creative change that meets service user need in person-centred and collaborative ways.

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