

The Status of Social Care – A Review 2007

Terms of reference.

The Secretary of State for Health, in her speech to the national Social Services Conference in October 2006, commissioned work to review how the status of social care might be raised. There were four broad areas, which might be pursued to develop and promote the workforce to achieve this end:

- The development of a Skills Academy to concentrate on leadership, management and commissioning.
- The creation of research centre(s) of excellence.
- The creation of a prestigious journal for social care that would emulate the status of The Lancet or the British Medical Journal.
- New awards for social care.

The following terms of reference for the review were agreed:

- To review the current arrangements for promoting the contribution social care makes to the promotion of people's independence, inclusion, health and well being
- To consider whether any action is required to improve the status of social care services and the social care workforce
- To propose recommendations and timetable on any next steps which will be required.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A Skills Academy for Leadership, Commissioning and Management.

The department of health with the DfES, and building on the work of Skills for Care, should actively consider the creation of a Skills Academy for Social Care to develop skills in leadership, commissioning and management across the whole social care sector.

The Skills Academy should have an ambitious aim linked to the purpose of the service itself, it should inspire and motivate people to want to lead social care services, it should aim for leaders in social care to be the best leaders in the public service! Therefore:

- It is necessary to articulate that the purpose of a skills academy for social care is to support people to maintain their independence, enable them to play a fuller part in society, protect them in vulnerable situations and manage complex relationships ***by developing world class practice leaders, service leaders, system leaders, and future leaders across the whole sector of social care.***
- The goals of such an Academy should be to:
 - Transform the lives of people who rely on social care services through excellent leadership of the service;
 - To develop leadership across the public, private and voluntary sectors of social care;
 - To identify and grow leaders in all parts of the sector;
 - To create a 'fit for purpose' academy.

The structure proposed by Skills for Care for the development of a virtual Skills Academy for social care appears sound and a practical way to proceed, however:

- The Academy should have a clear named identity separate from Skills for Care, even if federated to Skills for Care and supported administratively by it.
- Skills for Care should be requested to set up a high level steering group, jointly with SCIE, and including the ADASS, independent sector representative organisations such as ECCA, UKHCA, ACEVO and groups representative of those who use the service, to oversee the process of development of the Academy. This steering group might ultimately become the Board of the Academy.
- This steering group should develop a leadership framework to encompass the needs of the whole sector, and consider how to accredit courses provided by others as well as creating the new hubs. This would allow those courses which different parts of the sector consider important and relevant to them to continue, but within a new framework. Developing a database of existing leadership courses could be done relatively quickly.
- Consideration should be given to making all programmes available to the whole sector.
- The proposed academy should make links with existing leadership academies and seek joint programmes where possible

and where the contribution of social care is not diluted. For example, there is benefit for DASSs to participate in programmes for council Chief Executives. The academy might also arrange access to specialist courses run by other professional associations, for example, the Institute of Directors.

- The Academy should serve the needs of those about to take on their first leadership role as well as well as the needs of those who are experienced in the service.
- All DASSs should within three years of appointment complete an accredited programme specifically designed for social care services.
- Consideration is given to the proposal that all future DASSs should have attended such programmes before appointment.

A Research Centre of Excellence

- The discussion (concerning a new Research Centre), which is ongoing, within the department of health, needs to be aired more fully before any proposals to create a Research Centre of Excellence can be developed.
- The draft research strategy being developed by the department of health needs to be reassessed to take account of the totality of the social care sector.
- The Nuffield project to identify funding sources for social care research should be pursued.
- There are key areas of knowledge, which need to be informed by research, if social care in the 21st Century is to make an impact. Some of these are:
 - Models of personalised care – a concept which is recognised internationally and where such collaboration might be possible.
 - Effective models of commissioning.
 - Effective models of brokerage and advocacy
 - The effective role of social work and relationship support in adult social care
 - Effective models of user managed services

A virtual Centre of Excellence or research collaborative to pursue these themes and others from the White Paper 'Our health, our

care our say', should be considered. Such a virtual centre/collaborative would need new resources.

Dissemination.

- SCIE should be encouraged to give a higher profile to its dissemination role, particularly in respect of adult social care.
- SCIE should be asked to develop proposals to collect information and provide co-ordination of the existing collaboratives and reach joint agreement on what constitutes good practice and how it will be promoted.
- Similarly, SCIE be asked to identify the reach, and therefore the gaps in coverage of the good practice networks that currently exist and consider how such gaps might be closed.
- SCIE should develop a closer relationship with the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) to agree priorities for service development, taking account of both research and inspection findings, and assist the service to take on board best practice.
- SCIE should consider how all parts of the sector, including the private and the voluntary sector can be facilitated to take best practice on board.
- SCIE should be requested to make appropriate links with good practice networks in children's services to avoid overlap and duplication of effort.
- The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence is valued for the guidance it gives to the service. It is also valued for what it tells the health service **not** to do because it is ineffective. Such advice (on what not to do) from SCIE would be similarly welcome.

A prestigious journal.

- That a journal based on the model of that adopted by the Tizard Journal be considered, and that peer-reviewed articles be commissioned in a similar format, but with **all** articles including a commentary by people who use services.

- That the journal should be closely associated with SCIE in the manner of the Tizard Centre as above.
- That such a journal be considered for adult social care in the first instance.

Social Care Awards.

There was no appetite in the sector for a new social care award scheme beyond those that already exist.

- Consideration should be given to making the social care element of the health and social care awards a distinctly separate strand marketed separately and across the whole sector.
- Consideration should be given to the administration of the social care element separately from the department of health, possibly overseen by SCIE in conjunction with the other national social care bodies (CSCI, GSCC, CSIP) and focused on good practice, including managerial practice.
- The design of the awards should focus on service excellence and be planned to attract competition equally from all sectors.
- Judging of awards should include site visits, panels/judges should be chosen from across the sector, and people who use the services.
- Consideration be given to having a national media partner to promote the success of the winners.
- That the 'Accolades' be positively promoted externally beyond the sector as part of a media strategy to raise the status of the workforce with the general public.
- That these two awards be equally promoted as the most prestigious in the sector: the gold standard.
- Celebrating success can take a number of forms. In 2001 the Prime Minister held a reception for social workers at Downing St. This was the first time such a reception had been held. There has not yet been another! A reception for people working in adult social care services would be widely appreciated.

Improving the service.

Articulating the vision

- The opportunity of the CSR announcement should be taken to raise the profile of the service with a co-ordinated effort involving the national bodies and representative organisations. An article in the national press? (Link with a strategy for improvement – see later recommendation)
- A major speech by the Chancellor or the Prime Minister on the importance of social care should actively be considered.
- Review the existing pattern of national leadership meetings. The stakeholder meetings at the department are perceived as having improved since the Director General's arrival, other top level meetings need to be given a clear focus on delivering the future.

Skills

- A further push to raise the basic qualifications in the workforce should be considered. Consideration also needs to be given to basic courses in the English language for immigrant workers.
- Until the general public can recognise a real push to raise the competence of the staff engaged in direct care, they are unlikely to regard it highly.

Registration.

- Aim for a totally registered workforce – the registration does not have to be with the GSCC; ways should be found of accrediting existing qualifications so that they count in the National Minimum Standards and workforce data.
- Such systems however, only reassure if the public know about and have confidence in them.

Other professionals.

- Opportunities for other disciplines to work in social care services, whilst not diluting a specific professional social work contribution, should be actively promoted.

New types of worker

- Consideration should be given to the early implementation of roles such as Community Care Worker, which could be registered with the GSCC.

Quality of provision.

- DASSs who have a role to maintain the quality of social care in their area should actively consider such (independent sector) improvement strategies locally as part of their commissioning role.

Transformation Agenda

- The department should consider how its current capacity building resources might be used systematically to help the service improve using such (remodelling) improvement models. Exhortation on its own is unlikely to be effective!

Bearing in mind the recommendations of this review, active consideration should be given to the launch of a national, co-ordinated improvement strategy for social care involving the national bodies for social care and representative organisations, including people who use the service, as part of the CSR announcement and the initiative to promote the importance of social care.

April 2007.