

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON SOCIAL CARE

Social care workforce inquiry 2007/08

The inquiry

Between October 2007 and May 2008, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Care conducted an inquiry into key issues relating to the workforce in children's and adult social care.

Government policies in respect of social care for adults and for children and families are undergoing major change and development. While the inquiry was taking place, the Department for Children, Schools and Families published the Children's Plan and its associated Children's Workforce policy statement, and the Department of Health with other government departments and stakeholder bodies published *Putting People First*, a Concordat and action plan for the transformation of adult social care.

Both plans require substantial reorientation and re-skilling of the workforce, changing patterns of deployment, delegation, and the development of new ways of working in partnership with children, adults and families. Both Departments have been working on workforce development strategies and action plans.

The Group focused its inquiry on four questions:

1. What are the main problem areas for recruitment and retention, and how are they being tackled?
2. What steps are being taken locally and nationally to raise the status of the social care workforce, and what more could be done?
3. How are education, training, staff and management development being used to equip the workforce for changing needs and expectations?
4. How can people using services and carers have a greater say in the how the workforce is trained and deployed, and in its ways of working?

The All-Party Parliamentary Group's conclusions and recommendations are summarised below.

Annex A lists the organisations who gave oral evidence to the Group

Conclusions

1 What are the main problem areas for recruitment and retention, and how are they being tackled?

- 1.1 There are significant problems of recruitment and retention with social workers in both adults and children and family services; with home care staff, where one third of local authorities report difficulties; with residential child care staff; and with foster carers, where there is a national shortage of 10,000 carers.
- 1.2 Within this broad picture, the position varies greatly between local authorities, and among different independent sector employers. Some have been more effective than others in improving recruitment and retention. Government is working with partner bodies on a new Adult Services Workforce Strategy, which should help workforce reform and make social care careers more competitive.
- 1.3 Large parts of the workforce continue to experience problems of low pay, low status, poor working conditions and overload. The situation is exacerbated as pressures on local authority budgets result in low fee levels to independent sector providers, who employ the overwhelming majority of care staff in adult services.
- 1.4 Partly as a result of recruitment problems in care services, the numbers of migrant workers in social care have increased significantly, and they are making a valuable contribution. Employers and workers face challenges, including problems with visas, work permits and CRB checks, overcoming language barriers, securing accommodation and accessing training.
- 1.5 Employers have tried a wide variety of measures to tackle the problems, with some signs of success. Competition between employers has mixed results, but making sure staff feel valued, and providing training and support to help them do the job, produce significant benefits.

2 What steps are being taken locally and nationally to raise the status of the social care workforce, and what more could be done?

- 2.1 Despite the government-sponsored recruitment campaigns and other measures, the lack of public understanding of social work and social care is a major problem. Not enough has been done to celebrate and raise awareness of the value and quality of their contribution.
- 2.2 Introducing the degree-level qualification has increased the status and perceived appeal of social work. Work is continuing to build on *Social Work at its Best*, the review of social work roles and tasks, and remodel social work practice, education, professional development and support to meet changing policy and user and public expectations.

- 2.3 In the longer term, measures to professionalise the care workforce through improved training and registration with the GSCC, which have been welcomed by care staff, will help to raise the status and enhance the public standing of care work.
- 2.4 In the debate the government is promoting about the future and long-term funding of care and support, there are opportunities to present a new, positive vision of the contribution made by social care staff to the lives of individuals, families and the community.
- 2.5 In merging the inspection systems for health services and social care in the new Care Quality Commission, it will be important to maintain a strong focus on improving standards in social care service provision, workforce development and dissemination of good practice.

3 How are education, training, staff and management development being used to equip the workforce for changing needs and expectations?

- 3.1 The Government departments are involving a wide range of stakeholders in developing new workforce frameworks to support implementation of the Children's Plan and *Putting People First*. Given the scale and nature of the changes involved, it is important that training resources are sufficient to reorient and re-skill staff and managers in all sectors, so that they can deliver the outcomes people are seeking.
- 3.2 There is widespread support for the proposed Skills Academy for Social Care. Strong forward-looking leadership and management is required at all levels in local authorities, provider bodies, user-led and carer organisations, and partner agencies, in order to carry forward the required changes in professional and organisational cultures and promote innovation in practice and service delivery.
- 3.3 Social work has a variety of key roles to play in the new agendas for children's and adults' services. The social work degree, the introduction of newly-qualified social worker status, and the revised framework for post-qualifying education and training should improve the quality of practice and help to keep able staff in direct work with children, adults and families.
- 3.4 A range of good local education and training initiatives are emerging, but they need to be more widely available and accessible. Fragmented funding streams are a major problem, and measures are needed to rationalise the provision and application of training funds.
- 3.5 The NVQ framework has delivered extensive training and staff and management development opportunities, but it requires greater flexibility to respond to the wider range of providers and new job-roles emerging under personalisation. There is a need to ensure staff are competent and qualified to undertake their wider responsibilities.

4 How can people using services and carers have a greater say in the how the workforce is trained and deployed, and in its ways of working?

- 4.1 A variety of methods have proved effective in involving children, adults and families in qualifying, post-qualifying, in-service and workplace-based training. There is evidence that their participation enhances learning and staff development.
- 4.2 More should be done to gather and apply feedback from people using services to inform and shape staff development and training. Children and young people with experience in care have given clear messages about where improvements are needed in social work training and practice.
- 4.3 People and their families are increasingly employing their own staff, and commissioning and managing their own personalised support. They are having to consider the training and development needs of those they employ, assess the competence of services they purchase, and develop additional knowledge and skills themselves.
- 4.4 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and the development of local commissioning and workforce development strategies for children's and adults' services, are opportunities for people using services, and their families and carers, to exercise real influence over long-term plans and decisions about the workforce needs of the future.

Recommendations

The All-Party Parliamentary Group recommends:

- 1 Government, its partner bodies and employers should develop a concerted and sustained programme to **celebrate the contribution and enhance the status and job appeal of social work and care work** with children, adults, families and carers, sharing and publicising stories of good practice and good outcomes.
- 2 Government should **use the debates about the future of longterm care and support, and the National Carers Strategy**, to raise public awareness of the contribution made by care staff to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community, including their support for people providing care for relatives.
- 3 In view of the increasingly complex needs of many children, adults and families receiving social care, Government, employers and workforce bodies should work together **to recognise and strengthen the professionalism of social care work** through wider access for care staff in adults' and children's services to training, GSCC registration, supervision and continuing development..
- 4 To **ensure social workers are equipped with the skills, supervision and support to play their key roles in transforming services** for children, adults and families, Government and its partner bodies should work with employers, people using services, professional bodies and education and training providers on development and reorientation programmes.

- 5 Government, employers and commissioners should **recognise the scale of the training resources required to implement the changes envisaged in the Children's Plan and the transformation of adult services**, and ensure the required funding is invested in training staff, managers, foster parents, carers, volunteers and people controlling their own support arrangements.
- 6 Employers should work closely with other stakeholders, national agencies and government to **develop robust plans for the design, operation and outreach of the Skills Academy for Social Care**, to ensure it makes its full contribution to the transformation agenda and leadership and management development at all levels, across sectors and amongst carers and people using and controlling services .
- 7 Action is required to **rationalise and coordinate the use of training resources from the wide range of available funding streams** at national, regional and local levels in order to achieve improvement, reskilling and culture change efficiently and effectively .
- 8 Local authorities should ensure the full range of children, adults, carers and families using services are **actively involved in, and able to influence, local strategic needs assessment, commissioning, and cross-sector workforce planning and development**.
- 9 Directors of Adult Services should work with user-led organisations, and with people using direct payments and individual budgets, to identify and respond to the **new training needs emerging from the introduction of self-directed support, co-production and other aspects of personalisation**.
- 10 Employers and education and training providers should maximise opportunities for children, adults, carers and families using services to **participate in the design and delivery of training and staff development, and to be properly rewarded for their contribution**.

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Annex A

Evidence received by the Inquiry

Following an initial presentation to the Group by Dame Denise Platt on the findings of her report on “Improving the status of social care”, the All-Party Group received a range of written submissions and had four meetings to receive oral evidence. The following organisations gave evidence:

- 1) Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
- 2) Ofsted
- 3) Skills for Care
- 4) Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
- 5) General Social Care Council (GSCC)
- 6) Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)
- 7) Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)
- 8) Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA)
- 9) Local Government Employers (LGE)
- 10) College of Occupational Therapists (COT)
- 11) National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL)
- 12) Princess Royal Trust for Carers
- 13) Social Care Association (SCA)
- 14) National Association of Adult Placement Services (NAAPS)

Representatives of other organisations attended the evidence hearings and were able to put their points of view and ask questions.