General Social Care Council

social care institute for excellence

# Living and Learning Together Conference Report

## August 2004

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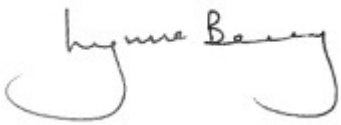
## FOREWORD

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) and Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) share a commitment to putting service users and carers at the heart of all aspects of social work and social care, including social work education.

As part of this commitment, the GSCC and SCIE held a joint conference in November 2003, to promote and share different approaches to service user and carer involvement in social work education and training.

This was the first conference to share practice about this important initiative on a national basis. The conference built on the research undertaken by SCIE during 2003, which led to the development of *Resource Guide 2 - Involving service users and carers in social work education* (SCIE, March 2004). It provided an important opportunity to share in a direct and active way specific examples of services users and carers working with universities and providers, not only in the degree but also in post qualifying social work education and training.

This report provides a summary of the content of the conference, an analysis of lessons learnt and some suggestions and practical tips about putting this into practice effectively. We hope it will contribute to further developing knowledge and dissemination of good practice in this area.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We should like to thank:

- Steering group members and colleagues in both SCIE and GSCC for their vision and commitment in planning the conference and their support on the day.
- All workshop facilitators for their willingness to share their experiences, challenges and successes, and their enthusiasm and openness in helping us to understand the issues.
- Our plenary presenters.
- Everyone who attended.
- All those who advised on the content of this report – namely, Enid Levin (SCIE); Fran Branfield (Shaping Our Lives National User Network); Michael Preston-Shoot (Professor of Social Work, University of Luton & JUC-SWEC representative); Madeleine Starr (Carers UK) and Justine Stewart (PQ awards representative).

**Notes:** We are aware that there are different preferences about how service users and carers are identified as groups and that language is evolving. For the purposes of this report, and to reflect the language currently used in the majority of documentation and policy guidance, "service user" refers to any person who receives or is eligible to receive social work or social care services and "carer" refers to any person who cares for a service user. We are also aware that service users and carers have different and individual perspectives and experiences. However, the messages from this conference about engaging with and involving people in social work education appear in many cases to be transferable across the groups.

We have tried to make this report accessible for all. It is also available on the GSCC web-site at www.gscc.org.uk, the SCIE website at www.scie.org.uk and in braille on request.

## KEY MESSAGES

We would encourage you to read the full analysis, where quotes from facilitators powerfully capture the importance of these ideas.

1. **Enthusiasm and commitment are essential**
   - There are benefits for everyone from working in partnership in this way.
   - Service user and carer involvement means commitment and building trust.

2. **Engaging with service users and carers means building and sustaining relationships**
   - It is important to engage with a diverse range of service users and carers and to build networks and capacity for involvement together.
   - In order for involvement to work it should be understood that it is not a cheap option.
   - Service users and carers need to be valued, trained and supported.

This means:
   - Prompt and appropriate payments;
   - Accessibility to university facilities;
   - Being provided with the means to achieve skills to be effective partners; and
   - Being respected and taking their individual needs into account.

3. **Involving service users and carers has implications for all aspects of social work education and training**
   - Strategies need to be developed to recognise and involve service users and carers in all aspects of social work education, including user-led practice learning opportunities and research.
   - University cultures and structures may need to change so as to enable them to support and welcome service users and carers.

4. **Learning methods**
   - Being open to a variety of learning methods will aid partnership working. User-led materials, videos, poems, art and theatre are all ways service users and carers can contribute to social work education.

5. **Practical issues**
   - Practical issues must be addressed to meet individual needs arising from transport, accessibility and communication.

## INTRODUCTION

**"A very useful and enjoyable day - stimulating and thought provoking. I went back buzzing with ideas and practical tips about how to move forward"**

Comment from delegate

This is the report of the joint GSCC/SCIE conference held in November 2003 to promote the involvement of services users and carers in social work education and training.

It contains the full text of two keynote speeches, summaries of each of the ten workshops presented, an analysis of lessons learnt, key messages and contacts for further details.

The report is aimed at all providers of social work education and training at qualifying and post qualifying level, and all service user and carer organisations and networks already involved in, or interested in becoming involved in, social work education.

The report is being launched in the context of recent announcements demonstrating the continuing national drivers to ensure that service user and carer involvement is central to social work education.

On 24 November 2003, 149 people attended a joint GSCC/SCIE conference to promote the involvement of service users and carers in social work education. The conference was opened by Lynne Berry, Chief Executive of the GSCC, and plenary presenters included Peter Beresford, Chair of Shaping our Lives, Elaine Barnes, a carer and development worker with Rethink, Sheffield. Enid Levin from SCIE, presented key points which have now been published in the *Resource Guide 2 – SCIE, March 2004*. Delegates also enjoyed a theatre presentation by the Red Rose Chain.

Ten workshops were presented by a range of service users and carers with experience of contributing to social work education and training, working together with university tutors and training providers. These included young care-leavers, asylum seekers, mental health survivors and their carers, people with learning difficulties, disabled people, and carers for autistic children.

It is not possible to reproduce all the valuable information gained from plenary presentations and workshops in this report. However, readers are encouraged to contact workshop facilitators directly as listed at the back of this report.

A steering group composed of representatives from service user and carer organisations (Shaping our Lives, Barnardos, and Carers UK), together with education provider representatives, SCIE, and the GSCC, was set up to plan and implement the conference. It was intended that the planning, organisation and delivery of the conference should mirror good practice and identify lessons to be learnt in working effectively together.

The conference title reflected the principle of drawing on the lived experiences of service users in order to learn together about jointly contributing to social work education and training.

We think the challenges and rewards experienced in planning and delivering the conference mirrored the experiences of those who are currently "living and learning together" and hope this report will in some way contribute to further developing knowledge and disseminating good practice in this area.

## THE CONTEXT

Service user and carer involvement has become one of the guiding principles of the provision and arrangements of social services so that such services can be improved and become more effective in meeting diverse needs. As such it is essential that those training for careers in social work and social care learn about and understand service user and carer perspectives and how best to work in partnership with them.

Awards developed by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) throughout the 1990s required social work education and training courses to consult with, and have systems to involve, service users and carers in their provision. Initiatives have developed in a piecemeal and ad-hoc way across the country, with the primary examples being involvement of service users and carers in providing one or two teaching sessions about their experiences.

The honours degree in social work recognises the importance of involving service users and carers in all aspects of social work education by making this a key requirement for approval of universities wishing to award the degree. Service users and carers were consulted in determining the new qualification and are now expected to have a role in all aspects of the degree from selection of students, to course design, delivery, assessment and review. It is inevitable that this focus within the degree will have implications for all post-qualifying education and training.

Whilst there are some very good examples of involvement, this remains a relatively new concept for many in higher education. Involvement has been non-existent or minimal and the culture within universities and other organisations appears to have created barriers to further development.

However the picture is beginning to change. Recent initiatives have sought to inform and underpin this work:

- the recent *SCIE Resource Guide – 2* gives examples of good practice in this area (available from SCIE, see contact list);
- Department of Health (DH) funding has been awarded to each provider planning to offer the degree, to establish infrastructure and develop involvement of service users and carers; and
- a report collating initial responses about how these grants have been used was included in the conference pack and is available on the website at www.gscc.org.uk.

A recent announcement from DH states that further funding is being made available to:

- universities to support service user and carer involvement;
- SCIE to develop a strategy to support service user and carer-led organisations in fulfilling their role; and
- Topss to establish learning materials and training for service user and carer involvement.

## KEY NOTE PRESENTATIONS

**Peter Beresford** is a long-term mental health service user and is Chair of Shaping our Lives National Users Network (SOLNUN). A renowned researcher and campaigner in the field of citizen involvement, he is Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Centre for Citizen Participation at Brunel University and has written many books and articles about service users' rights and empowerment.

**"User involvement in social work education, in general, is not rocket science. It is not a complex technical exercise, requiring advanced education. It is about commitment. Commitment, commitment, commitment… and trust building."**

About a year and a half ago, I was asked to speak as a service user at a seminar at a campus university distant from where I live. As a long-term mental health service user, travel is still a problem for me. I would have to stay overnight. The senior academic inviting me said he would take me out for a meal in the evening, so I agreed to contribute. The seminar was positive. He explained however that he had to get home. He said nowhere in town would be open on a Monday night, which of course afterwards I found out was not true. He left his women lecturer colleagues, who couldn't say no, to entertain me. They were kind, but there was only a bar available which didn't serve meals. Then I was left at about 7.30 to go to the student room booked for me (with no tea making equipment, no telly, no information about transport). I had a restless, sleepless night and had to leave without breakfast to catch my train. (I could not cope with waiting for a later train.)

Speak to service users who have been asked to contribute to social work courses and you will find there is nothing remarkable about this experience. It has many comparable manifestations – although at least I got paid. It is where we have come from with user involvement. It must not be where we are going.

I don't know how many times this has been said but it still holds true. User involvement in social work education, in general, is not rocket science. It is not a complex technical exercise, requiring advanced education. It is about commitment. Commitment, commitment, commitment. Like all user involvement it is about trust building. I can't stress this enough. This is what's happened with all the organisations which we in Shaping Our Lives have had successful dealings with.

Those involved in education need to know that service users will understand the difficulties you are facing – and I know about those as someone who works in a university as well as being a service user. They will know only too well we won't all reach the moon in a week. They will generally be forgiving of unavoidable problems and difficulties (service users know a lot about these first hand) if they see people are trying – people are committed. But if that isn't there, well pretty soon nor will service users be there either.

Of course having your heart in the right place isn't enough on its own. But there is now a lot of experience about how to involve service users in education and training effectively. Some of this is now available in the report produced by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), which pulls together a lot of existing experience and good practice.

But don't forget, this new qualification really does mean a break from the past. Senior academics, social work professors who think it's just a matter of making things look different – twiddling at the edges – let them know they are going to be proved wrong. Old or new university, I don't think traditional status will stay secure unless this core activity is supported with commitment and determination. There is I believe strong support for making user involvement real from the centre. Increasingly students who have never known anything different, will expect this and be committed to it as part of the package. If courses don't make sincere efforts to take this forward, then I believe we can be sure that they will be seen to slip down the league tables this government so values.

I haven't much time, so I can only headline some key practical and broader issues for the future, but that's what I'd like to try and do before I close.

These I think come under at least three core headings. These are:

- **Values**
- **Strategy**
- **Practice**

**Values** are critical. We now know well the values that must be in place for user involvement to work here. Values of treating service users with honesty, openness, respect, equality and of course commitment. It means increasingly basing learning on social models and approaches to understanding. It means no longer using the phrase users and carers like an un-thought out mantra, and distinguishing clearly between the two. These are also the core values that service users want from social work and social care.

Second, **strategy**. I can't stress enough that the requirements across every aspect – every aspect and stage - of the new social work degree for user

involvement, represents a radical break with the past. It means a fundamental culture change. We will all need to be doing things differently. For this to happen new arrangements, new structures, new relationships will need to be established, supported, developed.

Nobody will be able to do this successfully in isolation. Courses will need to explore developing relationships with other courses, perhaps on a regional basis as some have, to maximise their capacity. New relationships with local, regional and national groupings and organisations controlled by service users – not others speaking on their behalf. I think each college course will need its own small grouping – champions is the jargon now – set up to have responsibility to make sure these things happen – people who are ensured time to keep things going; points of contact for inside and outside; people with commitment and enthusiasm for this development.

And similarly, I think there will need to be ongoing structured groupings which include all the key stakeholders, service users, educationalists, practitioners, agencies and students to develop meaningful partnerships to take things forward. We've got to address these issues of user involvement with the determination that was needed 20 years ago to begin to challenge racism, sexism and heterosexism in social work – and try and avoid all the tokenistic responses that generated.

There are many things that we won't just be able to do on our own patches as service users and educators, where there will need to be combined efforts, for example, producing additional guidance material, developing standards and protocols for equal involvement and access and so on.

Third, **practice**: how we actually try and do this.

- Training
  This is going to mean an enormous investment in induction, training and learning for user involvement to support college staff and service users taking on the new roles required of them.

- Supporting user controlled organisations
  In some areas it will mean not only supporting user controlled organisations to enable the effective, accountable involvement of a wide range of service users. It will mean supporting the establishment of such independent user controlled organisations and developing individual capacity. Trying to take forward user involvement through a few isolated individual service users will not work – it will only mean tokenism. We must be thinking of building local, regional and national user and user controlled organisation capacity.

- Addressing diversity
  Involvement needs to include the wide range of groups who use social care services, including those facing the greatest exclusions and discrimination. It means addressing difference to include people on the basis of good anti-oppressive practice. It means developing a broad based user-defined access policy and practice.

- Payment
  It means paying service users and this raises big issues of how universities are going to learn to pay quickly, appropriately, and if necessary, upfront or immediately. It means facing up to the conflict between government pressure for user involvement and payment and the failure of the benefits system to support this. Shaping Our Lives has now produced a report the Minister requested on this subject to try and take it forward. It is a problem and at local level demands discussion with benefits agencies and welfare rights experts.

- Involvement in all aspects of education
  It means that service users and their contributions are engaged at all levels, stages and aspects of the new qualification, with support for user controlled placements, equal purchase of user produced materials and learning resources and so on and so on. It also crucially means supporting equal access for people with experience as service users to become students and staff. This has a very long way to go. It is when this happened in the context of race equality that those equality issues really began.

- Research
  There needs to be effective service user involvement in research. This raises issues in relation to university ethics procedures. It means that the contribution of user controlled and emancipatory research must be reflected in learning and research activity.

Finally, **Evaluation**.

I have stressed this shift to involving service users in the new social work qualification as groundbreaking and fundamental in significance. We need to know how it is working out; the problems and achievements it is generating. How best to deal with the obstacles. How things are going in different places. We need course by course as well as national evaluation. The Department of Health is commissioning an evaluation of the new degree. But it is not coming from service users despite the central importance of user involvement in it. We need additional components and initiatives for evaluation that explore these issues with the expertise that users and user researchers can bring. We need to know what service users think of progress; what they want from it; how well or badly it is being delivered.

Social work and social care are treated like the poor relation of public services; the juvenile delinquent, the hopeless case who always gets it wrong. Yet, for example, social work seriously sought to address issues of institutional racism decades before other professions and public services would even acknowledge its existence. So I am not surprised that it is in our field of social care and social work that this potentially powerful initiative for user involvement is being made. It is really something for us all to be proud of. It is also something that we are all holding in trust. It is a big responsibility. We will make mistakes. But so long as there truly is the commitment to it that is so important, I think we will see it come to have meaning for many lives in the future. Thanks.

## A Carers' Perspective

**Elaine Barnes** is the Carers' Development Worker at Rethink Severe Mental illness in Sheffield. Elaine designs and delivers training and education packages for all mental health professionals to raise awareness of carers' experiences, issues and needs, and is involved in delivering training on the South Yorkshire North East Midlands Training Programme for Approved Social Workers and Post Qualifying students. Elaine is also a carer.

**"Carers learning alongside professionals and sharing their experiences**

There has been acknowledgment over the past ten years in government policy and legislation of the importance of working in partnership with carers. This also includes involvement in the education of the workforce.

There are **two main reasons** for involving carers in the education of the workforce:

**1. The contribution made by carers to the care plan of the service user.**

The support of families and informal carers makes an immense contribution to the care provided to people experiencing mental health problems.

**2. The needs of carers for help and support.**

In the National Service Framework for Mental Health, assessing the needs of carers of people with severe mental illness is one of the key standards that health and social services must meet to deliver modern mental health services.

Communicating with families and carers is a cornerstone of modern, effective mental health practice. All professionals need to be trained and educated to ensure that they are communicating with carers in the appropriate manner.

The work I have done training professionals has also involved carers. My experiences of involving carers have been positive. I am sure this has a lot to do with the fact that I am a carer myself, and this has helped to break down barriers.

**Five key points about recruiting carers:**

- When involving carers it is important to give careful consideration to their skills, confidence and their ability to stand back from their situation.

- A lot of reassurance is needed for many carers to realise that they have vital knowledge, skills and experiences to share with workers to improve service delivery.

- Carers are more likely to become involved if other carers are also involved.

- Carers are most likely to become involved when the burden of caring has been lifted.

- Once a carer becomes involved they are unlikely to let go because for many carers involvement is a form of recovery. (They might have spent years caring and have struggled trying to get professionals to acknowledge the impact of caring upon their lives without much success. Then in a training environment they often feel for the first time that they are listened to.)

**Preparation – structures that are inclusive of carers' needs and circumstances.**

- Who are being trained?
- What are the learning outcomes?
- What are the different teaching methods that will be used to get the message across?
- What are the names of the trainees? (It is important to check out any local/personal links and if so address this before and after the training.)
- Carers need to have access to relevant information to assist them during the training.

**We are working towards an agreed agenda.**

- Sharing our experiences.
- Offering another point of view.
- Real life experiences.

It is important to offer one to one support to carers before the training takes place, and afterwards, to reflect and get some feedback from each other as to how the training went from each perspective.

This shared learning has positive outcomes for both workers and carers. Carers become more confident in delivering training to professionals, and some will then suggest ways to change and enhance the training.

**Varied impact on staff**

Having been involved in training staff in health and social services for several years, I think the messages have more impact on newly qualified workers, rather than staff that have worked in mental health services for years. There is also a difference between nursing staff and social workers, as social workers seem to have a more holistic value base and perspective.

New qualified workers are keen to learn and find hearing first hand experiences beneficial for their personal and professional development.

Some staff that have been qualified for many years want to update their knowledge and skills and reaffirm that the ways they practice are still relevant today. The impact on them has led to significant changes in the way in which they work with carers. Which is good news.
Other workers attend training because their managers have either told or asked them to attend – "I have always worked in this manner and I see no reason to change". These are the workers who are within their comfort zone and do not want to come out of it.

**To conclude**
Carers learning alongside professionals and sharing their experiences (Living and Learning Together) has and can produce a positive outcome for both. I would strongly recommend that the earlier this takes place in a worker's learning, preferably before they start to practice, the better the outcome.

## Red Rose Chain Theatre

Red Rose Chain is a film and theatre company that focuses on social care issues and produces work that challenges attitudes and encourages professionals to improve practice.

***Hannah and her Brother*** is a short play that was created by young people from the Department of Health's Young Peoples' Reference Group, and was launched at the Quality Protects Conference in 2002. It explores the experiences of being in care, using humour to provoke debate around the sensitive issues it raises.

The play provides an honest account of issues including review meetings, education, bullying and foster placements. The play's dramatic and direct look at the challenges faced by young people in care makes it ideal for awareness raising events with social care staff and other professionals working in services for children and young people.

www.redrosechain.co.uk

## THE WORKSHOPS

**"This workshop was excellent precisely because the service users, practitioners and educators put their heads together to think through some good ideas together. They also looked honestly at the pitfalls, and difficulties. The focus was how to make sure that the full range of service users were involved, how to avoid exploitation and how to avoid unrealistic expectation on anyone's part."**

Comment from delegate

The workshops were chosen to provide examples of shared involvement in social work education across a range of different areas of involvement and across different social work awards. Proposals for ten workshops were received and evaluated against pre-advertised criteria by members of the steering group with the aim of promoting models of good practice.

A fee of £150 was paid for each workshop and travel, subsistence and personal carer costs were paid to all service user and carer facilitators.

The workshops were varied in terms of the way they were facilitated, ranging from formal to interactive presentations.

The summaries of each of the workshops that follow are based on notes provided by the workshop facilitators and the delegate note-takers assigned to each group. The statements in this part of the report do not necessarily represent the views of the GSCC or SCIE. Further details can be obtained from the contacts listed at the back of this report.

### Workshop A
### Working it out together: a problem solving workshop on involving service users in social work education

**Facilitators:**
Six members of the Suresearch network and Professor Ann Davis, University of Birmingham.

The Suresearch network is a Midlands based user-led network of mental health service users and interested academics and practitioners. Suresearch has offered important support across a variety of projects in the university and the local community. Recent projects have included action research, inter-professional education, assessment, issues of poverty and benefits, and risk assessment.

The aim of this workshop was to provide an opportunity for participants to share ideas and work on actual and anticipated problems in delivering service user involvement in student selection, curriculum development, teaching, assessing and contributing to the management of social work programmes.

The workshop was interactive and focussed on the following questions:

1. Why involve service users?
2. What are the barriers?
3. How to involve service users?

Some of the ideas from the "why" question were:

- To ensure that students have access to user led perspectives at an early stage in their training, especially when preparing for practice placements.

- Whilst recognising the challenge for tutors, this work would signal to students a positive approach to engaging with services, and the opportunity to share learning about situations where things go wrong.

- It was noted that academic environments can be isolating and the group was a way of providing support to all involved, including the academics and practitioners.

- To promote the 'lived experience' of social work.

Participants were invited to bring issues to the workshop and the following four themes were reflected in the many detailed questions:

1. How to engage the expertise of service users?
2. How to start working with service users?
3. How to work together, making the process of getting & sharing information a two-way one?
4. How to build sustainable working partnerships? (This includes getting practical ideas from programmes that are further ahead in the process)

This discussion was followed by an input from Suresearch members, providing examples of their own varied experience of involvement. This powerfully demonstrated the range of involvement, including user-led research which provided income to the group and the positive benefits felt by the service users and academics arising from being members of this network.

A key issue that was raised was the importance of engaging ethnic minority communities and including their representation. This meant taking an active stand to help all groups make a meaningful contribution, and not to exclude those who are not 'in the system'. The challenge of securing the full range of service user representation, particularly those from ethnic minority communities was seen as an important issue for further consideration by all those involved in developing service user and carer involvement in social work education.

## Workshop B
## Autism Rollercoaster: Professionals and parents working with autism

**Facilitators:**
Wendy Pike, the parent of an autistic child, and Anne Patmore, a social work professional.

Their work has contributed to inter-professional training, including social work practitioners and to students on the Child Care Award. It seeks to raise understanding of the experiences of carers of autistic children by direct training.

The format 'video/fact/impact' was presented. Video was used as a medium to help share knowledge and experience and identify good practice. Whilst the content related to working with autism, many of the key messages translate well into good practice in the involvement of service users and carers more generally, and to a much broader remit of service provision.

Key Points identified by the facilitators were:

- Parents were always being asked questions set by other people, but were never asked about what they wanted people to know.
- Professionals focus on the deficit model, i.e. what the child can't do rather than what, with help, they can do.
- There are problems with over promising that isn't delivered by professionals.
- The difficulty of transitional points at certain ages where services stop and there is nothing in place to follow.
- The importance of support and debriefing for parents after conferences.
- Videoing family situations in order to be heard at resource panels.

The workshop looked at ways in which these specific materials could be used on social work courses, but also made links with other aspects of education. It finished with the important learning point that messages about service user involvement in one area are transferable to other areas and that video is a very good resource for teaching and learning.

## Workshop C
## My Life in Huddersfield: Ordinary young people – extraordinary lives

**Facilitators:**
Besmir, young asylum seeker, and Ruth Neville, University of Huddersfield

'My Life in Huddersfield' was founded on the belief that young refugees and asylum seekers have a vital and positive contribution to make, in informing us not only about how services, professionals, agencies and student training can be improved to meet their needs, but also increasing our understanding about the strengths of young people in general and the important contributions they make towards their families and communities. The project involved university staff, Kirklees Refugees and Friends (KRAF) and an advisory panel that included a member of Kirklees Education Ethnic Minorities Achievement Team.

Students and social workers are increasingly working with asylum seeking families. It is important to be aware of the voices and feelings of the young people in these families, because the process so often simply focuses on the adult.

The workshop started with introductions, affirmation of ground rules and a poem written by one of the young people which questioned "Where are we?" and "Who can we trust?". Besmir and Ruth described the project. Fifteen young people had been involved. They were given as many options and choices as possible in recognition of the few choices available to them as asylum seekers and also as children and young people. At the beginning they overwhelmingly chose to meet at the university.

**"I didn't go to school much in my country so coming to the university is a big deal. Coming to the university makes you feel so cool. I tell all my friends I am going to the university and they're like 'what?'"**

Art was then used in working with the young people. They met new friends, worked on boxes, chose contents and textures that were of special significance, and wrote about themselves. Each young person was given a camera to take into Huddersfield and record places and people that were important to them.

One of the key messages was that these were young people, enjoying football Sunday league, shopping and their education, and were not simply asylum seekers. Their experiences have been good and bad. Racism was something shared by most of the young people in the project, but "not everyone treats us like that."

Throughout the project the young people were clear that they wanted their work to be used to help other people understand what was important for them, as this was a way of celebrating what they enjoyed in their lives. They did not want this work to be passed on in a good practice guide, which was seen as "so boring." It was decided instead to make a calendar.

**"We want our calendar to be about us. It must show different people from different backgrounds. We would like our drawings, our words and the photographs we have taken to go in. We want it to show something beautiful about Huddersfield and ourselves."**

Future plans are to disseminate information about this work and the calendar into the wider community, and for the group to make a video. Messages will be integrated into teaching on the degree programme with annual teaching on work with asylum seekers and wider dissemination through an exhibition for all university students. The close links with education will continue to be developed, and the aim is to spread the key messages to practising social workers as well as students.

## Workshop D
## Service user/survivor involvement in the management of an Approved Social Worker (ASW) programme

**Facilitators:**
Judy Beckett, mental health systems survivor/trainer, and Clodagh Murphy, Leeds Social Services

Judy and Clodagh offered the group the opportunity to hear about the development of successful service user involvement in the Leeds ASW programme. The aim of the workshop was to help the group understand the value of service user involvement in all aspects of the programme and to examine this from management and survivor perspectives. The facilitators stressed the importance of valuing each individual's unique experience, and invited the group to think about the challenges such involvement might bring and how these might be suitably addressed. Judy and Clodagh offered their own experience in an open and thoughtful way and this encouraged everyone else to contribute freely from their own personal and professional experience.

Involvement was looked at on five levels:

- As sessional trainers.
- On the external monitoring group.
- On the selection panel.
- On the assessment panel.
- On the programme management board.

The first two were relatively easy to achieve, being within the control of the programme co-ordinator, and being a CCETSW requirement. The others were more difficult and required champions at key strategic positions within the agency structures, together with a change in attitude and culture. The crucial factors that helped were the requirements of the degree, and the commitment from within the agency.

The facilitators shared their experiences with the group. These included providing taught sessions and the monitoring of the taught and practice elements of the course through meetings on a regular basis with the candidates. In working with the assessment panel, Judy had been able to persuade the panel to re-examine their assessment criteria and make alterations. On the selection panel the social care service users influenced the selection process by encouraging members to think about appropriate questions to ask, as well as reading application forms and taking part in interview panels.

Workshop participants considered the benefits and the barriers to involvement, sharing issues and key messages, one significant one being the benefits for social care service users and carers themselves of getting involved.

## Workshop E
## Creating an enduring working partnership to appropriately involve people who use services and carers in social work [and health] education

**Facilitators:**
Liz Barraclough, Glenys Dixon, and Tina Henderson from Hartlepool Partners (in Policy) and Wade Tovey, University of Teesside and Chair of the North-East Regional Liaison Group (Institutions in the NE delivering qualifying social work training and education).

The Hartlepool Partners group is part of a network that is working with universities and agencies in the north-east to provide a regional framework to involve service users and carers in training in health and social work. The aims are to support the involvement of service users' and carers' in training and education and to minimise "consultation fatigue" by having a central focus for requests for involvement. Users and carers should be accessible centrally to all the social care and health agencies instead of being sent to each individual profession in turn – multidisciplinary thinking was needed.

The group provided an overview of their project, and its' relationship to local authorities, primary care trusts and other deliverers of services in the geographical area. This work includes links with health and social care bodies as training providers, and practical examples were provided to illustrate tools for listening and involving users and carers.

Details of the 'Partners in Policy-making' residential course to provide the skills and confidence to play a more active role in decision-making were provided. The Partners' work originated in the USA, but had been instituted in England by the Training and Development Team in the north-west. During the residential course, trainers had shared their personal perspectives and facilitated those attending so that they in turn felt empowered to work with policy making bodies and to argue for the services and understanding that they as service users and carers felt was appropriate. The Hartlepool Partners presenting the workshop shared their experiences of this powerful course and set out the key themes and core values of the project. Exercise material was used to demonstrate the contribution to learning that can be made by the parents and carers of disabled children and young people.

## Workshop F
## Starting at the Very Beginning

**Facilitators:**
Gillian Haigh, Michelle Netherwood and Chris Stogdon, University of Huddersfield.

Two service users and a tutor jointly facilitated this workshop, modelling the approach they had taken to developing a new module for the degree.

They emphasised that it was important to start together from the beginning, not half-way through. They were clear that there was to be no "tokenism". They were starting with a "blank sheet" and there was no sense that the tutors had the upper hand in devising the module. Chris commented that this had been hard and the tutors had to learn some "fierce" lessons. The first was for the academics to emerge from the safety of their own territory and a venue that was acceptable to everyone needed to be found.

A lot of time was spent in building up trust. The service users were very wary at first that this project would be yet another venture where national guidelines were driving reluctant professionals to allow minimal involvement by service users so that they could "tick the box" and tidy the topic away under the table. Honest dialogue and respect for each other led to a feeling of safety in the group. The women all grew to like each other on a personal basis, although this never became a cosy relationship, and frequently there were real differences of opinion. They felt that their shared gender played a significant part in helping them to work together and in developing the 'feel' of the meetings.
In deciding who would join the group they had recognised that they could not aim to represent all social care service user groups. However, they would try to ensure that the module reflected contributions from a variety of services.

Much of the work had involved talking about the process for running the module, rather than the content, which was still being written.

Some key messages from the presenters were:

- The importance of courtesy, punctuality, respect and use of language in promoting inclusion, building inclusion, and building relationships of equality.

- Language is perhaps the biggest issue. At the beginning the service users asked, "What is a module anyway?" Tutors had to re-learn the way they spoke and wrote.

- A fundamental question was, "What do social workers need to know about working with service users and carers?" National Occupational Standards, (NOS) benchmarks and codes of practice needed to be broken down and made real – only then could they really influence teaching and assessment.

- It is important to avoid labelling when introducing people – we are not just 'service users' or 'tutors' – we have more complex identities and must respect how people wish to introduce themselves.

- The issue of payment for service users and carers needs to be approached creatively. There is a danger that service users who get on the 'participation bus' end up being dropped off at the same stop they got on at, whereas lecturers continue on their journey and move on to better jobs through putting 'participation' on their CVs. It is important to have an 'added value' system so that service users can move on too. Examples of this would be funding to go to conferences, access to library cards to study at the university, access to taught modules, support for academic learning, access to IT facilities – not just monetary rewards (which have problems attached). 'Added value' has to be an individualised system, because each individual will want different things to help resource their personal development.

- Wider university structures have to change too. For example validation events for modules/programmes need to aim for meaningful participation by service users too.

- Service users can play a real part in the assessment of students – how students present themselves, engage with service users, their verbal and non-verbal communication.

- Service users don't want to be wheeled in to do a spot of teaching, then wheeled out and then never hear anything more. They want common courtesy, to be visited at home initially to discuss the teaching, a proper introduction including being shown around the building, explaining who's who as "it's really hard to tell staff from students."

- A service user should never be urged to reveal more than they want to as this can be very demeaning – "Like five episodes of a soap in a single episode." Service users want to be treated as colleagues, and need to understand what the tutors want to get out of teaching.

The concluding message was that this is hearts and minds stuff. A big problem is ensuring that all members of the teaching team understand and take on board

new approaches. The Huddersfield group tried out the module on colleagues during a staff away day, which enabled everyone to recognise where they really were with service user input and involvement.

## Workshop G
## Moving on with Learning (MOWL)

**Facilitators:**
Bill Bunn and Terry Kelly - MOWL student members; Heidi Kenworthy - Advocacy Co-ordinator, MOWL at the University of Liverpool; Suzy Braye, Reader in Social Work at the University of Liverpool.

The Moving on with Learning project (MOWL) is an integral part of the Department of Sociology. It co-ordinates accredited programmes of study for disabled adults who have experienced a lack of opportunity in education, training and employment, and also runs a peer advocacy programme. The majority of MOWL students attending the university are long-term users of day centre provision for people with learning disabilities. Social work and MOWL students work alongside each other as co-learners on, for example, a 'barriers to learning seminar'. Use of the same canteen and facilities also encourages inclusion and acceptance. The MOWL students see it as a privilege and are excited to be involved with the project, the social work programme and college life. Above all, "it is great to move on to new levels of learning, to be in control, and try to change social workers, students and day care programmes for the better."
The MOWL project has close involvement with the social work course, providing teaching, learning and volunteering opportunities including placements for second year students. MOWL students, social work lecturers, and students are all learning about what does and doesn't work.

MOWL has produced a leaflet, *Moving on With Learning: Is It Time To Move On?* which is about its programme, and available from the contact address below.

**Why do we do it? Bill and Terry's experience.**
Bill and Terry explained that they do it because "we want social workers and students to change so that people with learning difficulties don't have the experiences we had. We want day care to change too and we do not want other people to be treated there like we were. For example, as grown men and women in our 40s and 50s we want to decide what we want to do. We do not expect to be treated like robots, nor do we expect to be told that we cannot go to the shops because we will get lost and cannot put the kettle on. This is embarrassing and shows a lack of pride and respect. This is still happening at day centres we visited recently."

"Our experience at the university is quite different to day centres. We are treated the same way as everybody else; we are learning and have choice about our programme and working towards qualifications. Because of MOWL we are now different people. Also, through our links with the social work teams, we help other people by travelling with them when they go to respite care and helping them to settle in."

**What happens before, during and after sessions when we are teaching students?**

"Even with support from the staff, teaching requires a huge effort on our part and it takes a lot out of us. At first, we felt very nervous and sometimes even tearful. We have got used to it but we can still feel the tension building up long before the session and we are very tired afterwards. This is partly because it brings back unhappy memories, for example, of living in asylums. So the best thing in the experience is teaching the students but the worst thing is taking a long time to relax and wind down. It is very important to have support and talk it over afterwards with staff and friends."

**How does it affect the social work students?**

The MOWL students work with the lecturers on their presentation. There is a long preparation and build up time. The students' reaction is one of the most rewarding things about doing the teaching.

"When we finished our first presentation, you could have heard a pin drop. Everybody said they had to concentrate hard and be very focused. The students reported that it affected them intellectually and emotionally, challenging their assumptions. For example, one said 'it shook my belief about the world'. They found the session hard to end and felt tearful, angry and ashamed about the experiences of service users that they had heard about. They had not expected to learn such things in the session but it had improved their sense of engagement and inspired them to change services for the better. Sometimes the students are angry about the session because it is not what they had expected to learn or what they came to hear about but it had to be endured.
After the session, some students develop different ways of being alongside service users and try to transfer the openness of the session to their workplaces. They report they can feel a shift in relationships in the workplace and in the balance of power between workers and service users so that there is more inclusion."

**Key learning points from workshop and discussion.**

- It is possible to develop learning opportunities for people deprived of basic formal education as a part of the university widening participation strategies, and to fully integrate the programmes into schools of social work and allied disciplines.

- The MOWL project provides access to learning, qualifications and a route to employment for disabled people in a university setting. This moves from day care to day opportunities.

- People with learning disabilities who are students themselves can work with lecturers to develop teaching and learning sessions for social work students.

- A long lead in time is required to prepare the sessions and, above all, build up the self-esteem, skills and confidence to face the students and share experiences with them. The demands that involvement must not be underestimated.

- It is essential to provide the time, resources and skills to ensure that service users have a good and empowering experience. Proper support is essential before, during and after the teaching. Emotional support and de-briefing is very important, and arrangements for this should be built in from the start.

- Social work students generally evaluate the sessions and placements with service user organisations positively. The students also need preparation and de-briefing to cope with the emotional and intellectual challenges of direct input from service users.

- The valuable learning opportunities provided by shared facilities and co-location of the two sets of students enables student social workers to learn from the other student group, and have placements in the project.

## Workshop H
## Participating in the new social work degree

**Facilitators:**
Alison Berry from CATS, (Citizens as Trainers) and Morna Rivers from Salford University.

This workshop was to be jointly presented by CATS and YIPPEE (Young Independent People Presenting Educational Entertainment Group) which are both linked with social work education at Salford University. Unfortunately, two young people and three members of the CATS group were unable to attend on the day.

This workshop provided an overview of the work of CATS (Citizens as Trainers), who work as a group providing emotional and social support to each other whilst

being involved in training at the university. Their aim is to provide honest and reliable presentations on the service user perspective – 'What you see is what you get.' CATS was formed seven years ago to help social workers and student social workers to hear about service users' experiences of and perspectives on using social services. It aims to promote existing good practice as well as identifying weakness. Although working primarily with students at Salford University, the group have taught and worked with students in many other parts of the country. This group have also worked closely with the Department of Health on a number of developmental projects linked to the new degree.

In 2002, CATS presented a paper on their work at the International Social Work conference held in Montpelier and have been invited to present a following up paper at this year's global social work conference, to be held in Adelaide.

The session addressed the challenges that are faced, and the key messages to take forward. These included:

- Accept that we (service users) are at the centre of your work.
- Recognise the need to nurture and sustain us in our work.
- Have some fun with us and enjoy working together with us; we are no different from you in our wants and needs. We want a happy fulfilled life, just like you.
- We are not just problems, but part of the solution.
- Focus on our knowledge, skills and talents, not just our weaknesses.
- Do more work with us in groups. We are more powerful in groups – our confidence gets better and our lives improve.
- Don't blame us for our situation; many complex reasons have brought us to ask for services.
- Acknowledge that if we are to be involved fully, we will need money for expenses/child care/transport. Real involvement isn't a cheap option, but it will save money in the long run.

An example was given of an ice breaker exercise developed by CATS involving an anonymous questionnaire, which aims to challenge assumptions about sexual activity and disability in a light hearted way. CATS are also involved in a six week citizen participation course and a SCIE project concerned with researching social work.

## Workshop J
## Young people on video – What young care leavers think about video in social work education

**Facilitators:**
Sherrell Barnett and Brian Kelsey, representatives from young care leavers consultancy group; Liz Green and Tom Wilks, lecturers in social work at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

This workshop was jointly facilitated, with a mixture of presentation, video, small group work, and plenary feedback and discussion.

The aim of the project was to explore the involvement of young service users in social work education, particularly in relation to the evaluation of video material. Particular care was taken in how to approach the young people in order to form the reference group. This involved using local contacts, writing to each young person and meeting with local groups. Following this process the young people were self-selecting, but were a representative group in terms of gender and ethnicity. (It was acknowledged that this had been a matter of luck, and the issue of representation would need to have been considered if this had not been the case.)

The young people had evaluated a range of video material currently used in social work education, and had now moved on to provide feedback on student videos of role plays. Workshop participants were shown video clips and the group discussed their usefulness in social work teaching.

The following points were raised:

- Video material needs to be current, realistic, and of good quality.
- The purpose of the material, in terms of the learning outcomes, needs to be clear.
- Poor practice and difficulties must be included. Social work students need to learn about how to deal with tensions and conflict.
- The young people's reference group found the student video material impressive.
- The value of young peoples' feedback in enhancing student learning was noted.

Future plans include developing this work further in terms of the use of video in this way to provide feedback to students. The students themselves were very interested and positive about getting this 'real' feedback. There are also plans for the young people to make their own video, and great enthusiasm within the group for this.

One of the key messages was the enthusiasm amongst the young people to become involved; to find out how social workers are trained; and to get involved in their learning and assessment.

## Workshop K
## Working Together, power and relationships

**Facilitators:**
Stella Harris, the carer perspective, Steve Moss, the user perspective, Lyndsey Stewart, Devon Social Services

This workshop took the form of short inputs and group discussion based on experience from an Approved Social Work (ASW) programme.

The programme uses stories as a basis for learning and teaching. In the workshop a life story was presented which told of childhood abuse and the journey to re-build confidence and self-worth to form successful personal, social and work relationships. From this came a clear message about the courage and healing power of individuals, and the importance of the listening skills of people offering services so that the system does not require an escalation of problems before relevant help is offered.

The following points were shared and discussed:

- The importance of service users and carers working closely together, but also having defined areas for separate input.

- The induction of a carer to the ASW teaching role, including a period of learning through 'shadowing' the carer who had given precious input to the course.

- Seeing the value of story telling from lived experience of the services and promoting this linked to learning objectives. This experience must not be devalued and must not become 'professionalised' with frequent telling. Carers and service users have considerable 'power' in holding these stories, living through them, recovering and making a contribution. Historically, the storyteller was an honourable and respected member of the community who bound people together, reminding them of the past. Being linked to a network can help with support and resource needs and help avoid 'burnout'. This forms a natural counterpoint to academic input.

- Within the overall framework of the ASW programme, the planning and delivery of each session is in the control of the carer or the service user presenting the session, so there is scope to be creative and to take control of the learning environment in this way.

- On this ASW programme each trainee meets with a service user and a carer to have a conversation, so that they have the opportunity to discuss approaches outside direct practice. This sometimes has a huge impact on individual learners, who although at the post-qualifying level, may not have had this experience of shared learning before.

- Sharing carers' perspectives is important. For example:
    - many ASWs consult with the nearest relative, who is not always the carer; and
    - a carer usually works alongside an individual and supports them to meet their living objectives – this could be linked to helping them maintain direct parenting of their children or a range of other life and work objective.

- Barriers may be present but they can be overcome and not necessarily get in the way of communication – bricks/walls can be put up but also broken down.

- On this programme payment to service users and carers is worked out on a similar rate to staff participation, with a tiered system depending on three different levels of input – a) observing, b) making a contribution c) delivering a session.

**The following key messages were delivered in this workshop:**

- Understanding the different perspectives of service users and carers helps ASW trainees to respond in a more genuine way.

- Where a carer/service user is linked to the network, and wants to use examples from the experience of others, they seek permission and share the content of this with the individual(s) concerned. (This promotes useful discourse with individuals who may not wish to have direct involvement but have their voice heard by conveying the story to the representative carer or service user.)

- Stories must not be seen simply as 'victim' stories – they are real and have the power to transform how services are delivered. (The 'becoming professional' argument may be a defence, a way of distancing social workers from the real human material that they are working with.)

- ASW workers must maximize the learning they gain from protected time with service users and carers to become skilled listeners, and to become more receptive to the views of service users and carers in the way they approach their work. (This may not be available in real work situations.)

- Payment issues and the benefit trap: Group participants felt this to be an urgent issue as they risk withdrawal of their benefits and a charge of fraudulent activity if they receive payment for their input to social work programmes. In particular the benefit system was seen to be very poor at dealing with intermittent arrangements and worked to fixed definitions of 'in work'/ 'out of work' terms which were worthless in this context. It was noted again that Stephen Ladyman MP, Minister for Community has taken an active interest in this particular area. In the meantime, programmes involving service users and carers must take responsibility for ensuring that the payment arrangements are 'safe' in terms of the benefit structure.

## ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNT – KEY MESSAGES

It is difficult to summarise the wealth of learning gained from this conference into a few bullet points and we would urge readers to read the full reports available.

The editors have drawn from all the contributions on the day to identify key themes and messages which are presented below.

### 1. The importance of enthusiasm and commitment – there are benefits for everyone

**"We are determined to teach social work students because we do not want anybody to go through what we went through and we want services to be better."**

MOWL (Workshop G)

The involvement of service users and carers in social work education and training is a requirement, but what drives it forward is the enthusiasm and commitment of all involved. There are cultural and structural barriers to overcome but the message from this conference is that effective involvement benefits everyone and needs to be permeated through to all levels and areas of training; this includes experienced workers who will be involved in practice teaching/assessing social work students. As Elaine Barnes emphasised, "Some experienced staff want to update their knowledge and skills and reaffirm that the ways they practice are still relevant today. The impact on them has led to significant changes in the way in which they work with carers. Others have the view that "I have always worked in this manner and I see no reason to change." These are the workers who are within their comfort zone and do not want to come out of it."

Effective involvement:

- ensures that training is firmly rooted in a service user orientation which supports the development of relevant key skills;
- is essential preparation for the development of good, evidence based practice;
- draws on the expertise which service users have about social work;
- promotes equality and can make a contribution to breaking down the barriers between professionals and service users in relation to education and practice;
- provides service users with an opportunity to give voice to their concerns and validates their experiences as users;
- ensures that real life rather than cases from text books are part of the course;

- promotes the empowerment of service users;
- challenges myths about the deficits and helplessness of service users and redresses the relative powerlessness of service users;
- teaches staff and students about doing things *with* people rather than *for* them;
- can be supportive, fun and enable learning for all;
- can allow service users and carers to benefit practically by finding out what they are entitled to expect from services;
- gives service users and carers the opportunity to "get stuff of your chest" and meet with others who can support and advise; and
- makes service users and carers feel good about the contribution they are able to make to professionals' training.

**"The purpose of involving service user at all these stages is to "ground" the course in the real experience of those who receive services."**

Workshop D

## 2. Engaging with service users and carers; building and sustaining relationships

### a) Inclusiveness

Peter Beresford's presentation and several workshops emphasised the importance of an inclusive approach involving a broad range of service users and carers and reflecting diversity.

**"Involvement needs to include the wide range of groups who use social care services including those facing the greatest exclusion and discrimination."**

Peter Beresford

Many workshop participants emphasised the importance of black and ethnic minority group representation, and of taking an active stand to help all groups make a meaningful contribution through recruitment, training and building trust. It is important not to exclude those who are not 'in' the system.

**"Asylum seeking children and their families bring a wealth of skills and experiences which enrich and enhance our schools, communities and wider society."**

Workshop C

**b) Building networks**

Having a range and network of users and carers is important to provide mutual support and to avoid over reliance and overload on a few people. It is often scary to visit new places and meet new people on your own. Working as a group provides support, fun and enables learning.

**"Being linked to a network can help with support and resource needs and help avoid 'burnout'. We are more powerful in groups. Our confidence gets better and our lives improve."**

Workshop H

Getting started or developing further involvement will mean developing new relationships, perhaps across regions, with service user and carer led organisations. It is useful to have a dedicated co-ordinator, (preferably a service user/carer or service user/carer group to act as a contact and support for other service users and carers (such as in Hartlepool, Workshop E). Peter Beresford emphasised the importance of establishing and supporting independent user controlled organisations to build capacity.

University and service user organisations will need to work in partnership to build capacity. The Suresearch Network (Workshop A) and Hartlepool Partners (Workshop E) provided a good examples of mutual capacity and support being developed. Building and sustaining relationship should mirror good practice and deliver on the value base of social work by respecting and valuing service users.

Basic issues of courtesy, punctuality, respect, use of language in promoting inclusion and building relationships of equality is important.

**"Service users don't want to be wheeled in to do a spot of teaching, then wheeled out and never hear anything more. You want common courtesy – be visited at home initially to discuss the teaching, a proper introduction including being shown the building, explained who's who – (its really hard to tell staff from students) - be treated as you would want to be treated yourself."**

Workshop F

### 3. In order for involvement to work there needs to be an understanding that this is not a cheap option. Service users and carers need to be valued, trained, supported and paid.

**a)** Valuing service users and carers contributions is not just about money, although that is important – see section on payment below

**"There is a danger that service users who get on the 'participation bus' end up being dropped off at the same stop they got on at, whereas lecturers continue on their journey and move on to better jobs, through putting 'participation' on their CVs. It is important to have an 'added value' system so that service users can move on too. For example, funding to go to conferences, access to library cards to study at the university, access to taught modules, support for academic learning, access to IT facilities – 'Added value' has to be an individualised system, because each individual will want different things to help resource their personal development."**

Workshop F

**b) Timing - Don't rush it!**

One of the most frequent comments about the conference was that it was "too rushed". This applied not only to the day, but to the experience of service user and carers involved in the planning. This concern was mirrored in some of the workshops.

It is important to allow sufficient time for building relationships, maintaining contact, planning, consultation and delivery. Service users and carers have busy lives - being involved in social work education is not their main job. They may need more time to book ahead for appointments and meetings, to read through papers, to travel and to get around a venue and to participate in meetings or teaching. Not everyone has email, so time needs to be built in for using the post. Time is needed to work with service users to ensure they have a good and empowering experience with proper support to prepare sessions and to build up and debrief.

Trying to rush things may put people off and exclude them.

**In summary, it is important to:**

- promote involvement through existing contacts and other local user and carer organisations;
- consider how to reach those who are not in the system and in particular to reach out to those from ethnic monitory communities;
- ensure basic courtesy and respect of all involved and to value their contributions;
- work together to identify expertise and skills;
- provide a means for service users to acquire the skills they need to be effective partners in the programme;

- agree and establish safety and support systems;
- identify the resources needed and work to deliver them, over time, drawing on university resources as well as the funds that are being made available by the Department of Health; and
- allow sufficient time.

## Payment

Valuing service user and carer contributions through appropriate payment is essential. There are a number of difficulties and pitfalls that often need to be taken into account and challenged as the tax, benefits and earnings rules apply. The financial systems of many organisations make it difficult to make payments in advance or give payment in cash or kind (e.g. vouchers) too, and have complex and lengthy systems of forms or invoices to enable payment.

It is important to take the following into account:

- the need to be clear about rates of pay and ensure that they are fair and equitable;
- the need to decide whether these are fixed or can be negotiated;
- the need to be clear how payment can be made and how long this will take;
- that service users/carers may feel more confident to work in pairs/small groups rather than singly;
- the need to be clear about the systems and rules for claiming expenses recognising the need for travel expenses (including taxis where necessary), personal carers, and child care or dependent care costs to be reimbursed;
- that some service users will value prepaid tickets being provided for journeys; and
- that all will value prompt payment.

Many participants echoed Peter Beresford's view that the issue of the "benefits trap" needed to be urgently resolved as they may risk withdrawal of their benefits and a charge of fraudulent activity if they receive payment for their input to social work programmes. In particular the benefit system was seen to be very poor at dealing with intermittent arrangements and worked to fixed definitions of 'in work'/ 'out of work' terms which were worthless in this context. It is noted that the Stephen Ladyman MP, Minister for Community has taken an active interest in this particular area. In the meantime, programmes involving service users and carer's must take responsibility for ensuring that the payment arrangements are 'safe' in terms of the benefit structure.

Nevertheless, it is important not to assume that all service users and carers are in receipt of benefits and each individual situation should be considered.

## 5. Involving service users and carers in all aspects of social work education and training.

This was an important message from the conference, underpinned by the requirements of the social work degree. Workshops A and D provided some good examples.

Key messages emerging were:

- It is important that systems are set in place to ensure that there is a robust system of service user representation in all aspects of the programme. It is not enough to make assumptions that people will find certain areas too difficult or be overwhelmed.

- Universities need to work with service users and carers to think of ways to achieve this through adapting systems and processes and providing support and training to those who wish to get involved.

- The first steps in involvement is often to get service users and carers to talk about their own experiences. This is very important but there is also a value in learning about the service user and carer perspective on many aspects of social work, such as the law, rights, assessment and communication.

- Service users and carers may need to work alongside academics and have training in order to feel confident to do this, perhaps building up modules together and teaching together.

- Thought needs to be given to how to engage service users in management meetings and course validation events through consideration to venue, timing, language, preparation and facilitation.

- User-controlled placements are another way of effectively involving service users.

- Partnership in and planning and carrying out research is also another way of involving service users and can be an important source of funding as highlighted by Sure-search.

CATS (Workshop H) gave some good examples of how service user led groups can develop and take on a large variety of tasks. This was exemplified by their presentations of papers at International Social Work conferences in France and Australia.

## 6. Developing attitudes, culture and structures within universities.

In order for service user and carer involvement in social work education and training to work, universities need to consider how to adapt their culture, processes and structures to support public and user involvement in their courses.

The professional/expert status of programme staff may need to be challenged and the use of academic jargon will need to be reconsidered.

**"Tutors had to learn some "fierce" lessons. The first was for the academics to emerge from the safety of their own territory."**

Workshop F

Validation events for modules/ programmes need to be adapted to ensure meaningful participation by service users.

Systems and strategies need to be in place to manage practical issues such as administrative support, a room for users, systems for prompt and appropriate payments and access to university facilities and events, as well as to make people feel welcome.

The benefits of shared facilities are described by MOWL:

**"We have a 'barriers to learning seminar' where the social work students and MOWL students are co-learners and all mix in together. We also use the same canteen and facilities and a lot has changed since we first started because we are included by the other students."**

Workshop G

### a) Power and empowerment – changing roles

Closely linked to changing attitudes and culture is the need to revisit roles and the balance of power in relationships – to consider who should take the lead in situations, how decisions are made and how to empower and enable service users and carers to take an equal role in course processes.

Universities can seem daunting places and people are in awe of academia. This is embedded in the jargon and protocols of some institutions.

**"Language is perhaps the biggest issue, e.g. the service users asked, "What is a module anyway?" Tutors had to re-learn the way they spoke and wrote. At the beginning it was best not to write anything down – just talk, listen, get to know each other."**

Workshop F

### b) Preparation and support during and after teaching sessions and meetings

An important message was that tutors and universities need to have the time, resources and skills to ensure that service users have a good and empowering experience. They should be able to provide proper support before, during and after teaching and other involvement, to build up self-esteem, skills and confidence. De-briefing and emotional support after the teaching is very important and arrangements for this should be built in from the start.

The emotional demands on individuals are very high, and people need support at that level as well as with practical issues.

**"Even with support from the staff, it requires a huge effort on our part and it takes a lot out of us. At first, we felt very nervous and sometimes even tearful. We have got used to it but we can still feel the tension building up long before the session and we are very tired afterwards. This is partly because it brings back unhappy memories, for example, of living in asylums. So the best thing in the experience is teaching the students but the worst thing is taking a long time to relax and wind down. It is very important to have support and talk it over afterwards with staff and friends."**

MOWL (Workshop G)

It must not be overlooked that these considerations also apply to the students.

**"The students need preparation and de-briefing to cope with the emotional and intellectual challenges of the direct input from service users."**

Workshop G

## 7. The learning medium

This conference demonstrated very well, the different methods of learning and how service users and carers could be involved in these. It also highlighted the value of purchasing materials and learning resources produced by service users to be used as training material for students/candidates.

**a) Video**

Two workshops, (B and J) included videos made by service users.
They showed that:

- video can be a powerful way to get across messages, which may not otherwise be heard;
- video enables those who are unable to come to meet students face to face for whatever reason to be involved;
- video material needs to be current, realistic, and of good quality;
- the purpose of the material, in terms of the learning outcomes, needs to be clear; and
- poor practice and difficulties must be included as social work students need to learn about how to deal with tensions and conflict.

**b) The power of stories**

Workshop K emphasised the huge value in story-telling from the lived experience of service users, and of promoting this linked to learning objectives.

**"This experience must not be devalued and does not become 'professional' with frequent telling. Carers and service users have considerable 'power' in holding these stories, living and coming through them, recovering and making a contribution. Historically, the storyteller was an honourable and respected member of the community who bound people together, reminding them of the past."**

**c) Poems and pictures**

At this conference, young asylum seekers described how they felt more comfortable using poems, photos and a calendar to get across their message.

**"We want our calendar to be about us. It must show different people from different backgrounds. We would like our drawings, our words and the photographs we have taken to go in. We want it to show something beautiful about Huddersfield and ourselves."**

**Feeling very bad, very cold**

**One black man was very kind**
**One Asian man was no good**
**One man was sick**

**"Go back to your country"**
**Finger prints and photographs**

**The black man brought us food**
**We don't know where we are**

**At last we go to my auntie's house**
**And we are safe for the moment**

**When we came to Huddersfield.**

### d) Theatre

The Red Rose Chain production was a most popular element of the day and demonstrates the use of drama and humour to engage people and make them think.

## 8. Accessibility and practical issues

Any work to involve service users in social work education and training should involve consideration of accessibility to venues, materials, processes and information. The following need to be considered:

- Communication – clarity, lack of jargon, ensuring meetings enable and do not set up barriers to communication and understanding.
- The use of interpreters, transcribers and translators where necessary.
- Arrangements for travel, parking and getting into and around the venue.
- Seating arrangements, space and table height for wheel chair users.
- Timing of meetings/teaching.
- Language, size and colour of written materials; availability in electronic and hard copy, Braille etc.
- The needs of assistance dogs.

## NEXT STEPS

Effective involvement of service users and carers in social work education and training is not something, which will be achieved overnight. Different courses are at different stages in this journey. It is an area that needs continued attention and opportunities to develop in order to evaluate and share ideas, difficulties and successes.

This agenda is being taken forward by a number of organisations such as the GSCC, SCIE and Topss, together with service-user and carer-led organisations and social work education programme providers. The Department of Health has recently announced increased funding to support a range of initiatives to ensure that service users and carers are effectively involved, including £640,000 for the GSCC to distribute to universities; monies to SCIE to develop a strategy to support service user and carer-led organisations in their role, and to Topss to develop service user-led materials and training for service user and carer involvement.

The steering group that planned this conference hopes to continue to consider ways to promote and develop service user and carer involvement in social work education and training.

SCIE continues to support the degree by producing a series of guides and reviews on the best ways of educating and training social workers. The recent review of the teaching and learning of communication skills will be followed by reviews of the teaching and learning of assessment skills, of law in social work, and of partnership working. Service user organisations are actively involved in all stages of the production of these reviews and guides, and in all the work that SCIE will be undertaking on social work education over the coming year.

The GSCC is committed to promoting service users and carer involvement in all social work education and training and will be working with providers and regional networks to achieve this aim. In addition, over the next year the GSCC will be:

- advising the Department of Health about the outcomes which might be expected from the successful application of funding provided to universities;
- reviewing how service user and carer involvement is being implemented in relation to new degree courses, which started in September 2003; and
- disseminating the outcomes of this review to all providers.

Whilst attention has been focused on the degree, the GSCC has also been consulting with service users and carers in the developmental work for the

review of the post-qualifying framework to ensure that the implications for involvement are taken forward.

We hope that in years to come all these initiatives, and this conference, will be seen to have contributed to ensuring that service users and carers have a central role in social work education and training.

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**General Social Care Council**
**August 2004**

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