Developing user involvement in social work education

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Executive summary

In 2003–04 the training for people who wanted to become social workers changed. For the first time people who use health and social care services were to be involved. For a long time service users have been saying 'Nothing about us without us', and now these important changes made it a requirement that service users should be involved in the education and training of social workers.

Shaping Our Lives, with support from SCIE, wanted to find out from service users how their involvement has been going. We wanted to find out what was going well or what was seen as 'good practice'; what, if any, were the problems and what issues were shared by all the service users involved in this training. We also wanted to find out what help and advice some service user groups could give smaller organisations who were not yet involved but who wanted to be. We wanted to see what ideas service users had about involving service users who often do not take part.

Finally we wanted to set up a service user forum – a large group of different types of service users who could share information and ideas about the best ways of being involved in social work education and help take it forward effectively.

To try and answer all these questions we did three different things:

1. We asked four groups of service users who were already taking part and/or were interested in training social workers to each hold a day event with local service users to find out what they thought about being involved in social work training.
2. We wrote to 1,300 service users and their organisations (in our newsletter mail-out) and asked if they were involved in social work education and training and if not, would they like to be.

3. We directly emailed 300 service user-controlled organisations (through SOLNET, our networking website), and asked if they were taking part in training social workers. We asked them to tell us of their experiences and ideas around training social workers.

These are the main things we found out:

- Service users think that the best way to get really good social workers is if service users take part in their training.
- Service user involvement remains patchy. There are areas of good practice; however, a large percentage of service user organisations would like to be involved but are not, and an equally high percentage of those that are involved would like to be more involved.
- Service users said that it was important that they were involved in all aspects of the training. This included helping to select students who would become social workers, doing a lot of the training and writing course work, as well as evaluating and assessing them.
- Service users believed that the best way to challenge negative perceptions of service users was for them to 'tell it like it is'.
- Good communication based on mutual equality and respect was central to good practice.
- Knowledge that service users had gained through their own experiences needed to be valued and treated equally, alongside academic knowledge.
- Service users clearly told us that a lot of examples of good practice were based around barriers being overcome or removed. Barriers and good practice are two sides of the same coin. Basic access requirements have to be met in order for good practice to proceed. Service users gave many examples of this. Here are a few:

Barrier	Good practice
No accessible transport to training venue	Arrange alternative accessible transport
Early morning start – for many service users this is not appropriate for many impairment-related reasons	Take this into account when drawing up timetables
Inadequate or lack of appropriate training for service users	Identify, with service users, what training is needed and ensure it is available
Reimbursement of expenses is very slow	Seek ways to reimburse service users at the time of outlay, or purchase tickets for travel etc in advance
Negative attitude and assumptions made by students and staff	Being open and receptive to service user knowledge – listening to what service users say

- Service users remain very concerned over receiving payments for involvement in activities and the effect this may have on their benefits.
- Good practice is based on mutual trust and honesty, and on the understanding that service users and social workers share common aims and aspirations. Often these can take time to develop.
- Service users valued diverse involvement. Service users came from all backgrounds and impairment groups, from all ages, gender and sexuality, from rural and urban locations, and service users recognised the importance of truly diverse involvement.
- Service users wanted to be involved in a three-way evaluation. That is, of themselves as trainers/tutors, of the student in all aspects of their training and practice learning, and also of the Higher Institute of Education's (HEIs) role in supporting service users to take part in training social workers.

- All participants said that their involvement meant that both service users and potential social workers developed a deeper understanding of each other's perspective.

- Participants reported that they believed their involvement would act as a way of removing barriers, especially attitudinal barriers, and promoting the social model that put the users at the centre of their care.
- Service users said that the benefits for social worker students of meeting with, listening to and working with 'real-life' service users and disabled people were enormous. All participants agreed that it would help challenge stereotypes and equip students to become good social workers.

Recommendations

The findings from this project have implications for all the key stakeholders involved in social work training and education and the development of effective service user involvement therein. This includes universities, colleges and other HEIs, service users and service user-controlled organisations, carers and their organisations, practice learning placement sites, and those regulating, assessing and accrediting social work and post-qualifying (PQ) training. An effective strategy for supporting the development of service user involvement in social work education will need to address all of these.

These recommendations are based on what service users told us, in regional meetings and by responding to our mail-out and email requests.

- *A service user forum:* the original plan to establish a service user forum to have a strategic overview of the development and implementation of user involvement in social work education is confirmed as essential. It would help ensure that improved practice was rolled out equitably across the country and challenge the present patchy development of user involvement in social work education.

- *Sharing knowledge and information:* many service users and service user-controlled organisations remain unaware that their input into the training of social workers is now mandatory. Information about the potential involvement opportunities for service users and their organisations needs to be developed and widely disseminated.

  Additional guidance on the principles both of and for good practice for user involvement in social work education needs to be produced and widely disseminated to all key stakeholders. Information and guidance needs to be developed specifically for HEIs on how to support service users and their organisations in social work education.

- *Access is an equality issue:* there is still considerable misunderstanding about what meeting somebody's access requirements actually means. Universities, colleges and other HEIs need to have regular access audits, carried out by a qualified auditor. In addition, service users should be given the opportunity to say, in advance of coming to the venue, what their own access requirements are.

  Access includes access to written material. All guidance and information (see above) should be available in appropriate formats.

Access includes access to libraries and facilities open to other tutors/lecturers/trainers. Universities, colleges and all HEIs should be reminded of their responsibilities under both the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Equality Duty.

- *Training to support service user involvement:* more training (particularly user-led training) needs to be developed for service users who want to become involved in training social workers. More training (particularly user-led training) needs to be developed for all key stakeholders around service user equality and participation.

- *Ensuring diverse involvement:* service users are keen that the diversity of the service user population is reflected in the make-up of all key stakeholders. This requires effective and proactive equal opportunities policies. In some cases this might require development work.

- *Safeguarding the future of user involvement in social work education:* service users feel very insecure about the future of their own organisations. Practical steps need to be taken to challenge this sense of insecurity and to safeguard user-controlled organisations. This is essential if service user involvement in social work education is to be effective and transformative, and to make sure that it has the potential to make its full contribution.

  Funding needs to be made available to service user organisations to develop and explore on their terms their own involvement in social work education. There is a need to further develop, operationalise and resource a national forum on service user involvement in social work education. A coherent programme of evaluation of the impact of user involvement in social work education on practice needs to be established in order to maximise its contribution.

  A significant proportion of service user involvement in social work education is currently being undertaken by ad hoc, informal groupings of service users. This development needs to be monitored. More support is needed for user-controlled organisations to be involved on equal terms with HEIs.

1 Introduction

> "Service user involvement is an integral part of the degree programme, and the degree would not happen now without service user involvement." (service user participant)

The introduction of the new social work degree qualification in England 2003–04 was widely welcomed as a means of improving the status of social work and increasing the numbers of people attracted to the profession. Moreover, the new degree explicitly recognised that the meaningful involvement of service users and carers was the most effective means of improving social care. The everyday experiences of service users and carers give them the knowledge and the expertise to say what would improve the quality of their lives and what they wanted from social care.

2 Background

The Department of Health (DH) is funding SCIE to implement action plans to support service user and carer participation in social work education. The project involves creating a national forum for service users and carers in social work education, promoting the exchange of good practice and testing out how service user and carer groups experienced in social work education can support the involvement of seldom-heard groups, thereby widening participation.

The project complements the work of the social work education programme providers, the General Social Care Council, Skills for Care, the Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee and the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work.

The action plans for supporting and widening service user and carer participation in social work education are based on the recommendations of the service user and national reference group hosted by SCIE and Shaping Our Lives, and on the findings from regional consultation events arranged by Shaping Our Lives (Branfield et al, 2007). The recommendations cover what the universities, service user and carer organisations and government could do to promote participation. The national reference group achieved a consensus that some resources for capacity building should be channelled directly to service user and carer-controlled organisations, in addition to the funding that universities continue to need to meet the degree and PQ requirements.

Recognising that service users' and carers' own organisations should lead this work, SCIE asked Shaping Our Lives National User Network to organise and support the involvement of regional and local service user organisations to take this work forward. Carers' views and perspectives are being sought independently from this work.

Shaping Our Lives developed a three-pronged approach to involving service users in this work.

1. We asked four groups of service users who were already taking part and/or were interested in training social workers to each hold a day event with local service users to find out what they thought about being involved in social work training.

2. We wrote to 1,300 service users and their organisations (in our newsletter mail-out) and asked if they were involved in social work education and training and if not, would they like to be.
3. We directly emailed 300 service user-controlled organisations (through SOLNET, our networking website), and asked if they were taking part in training social workers. We asked them to tell us of their experiences and ideas around training social workers.

This is the report of all three consultative approaches with service users.

3 Section 1: The regional events

During a meeting of the service user reference group (September 2008) three regional service user organisations and one networked individual service user were identified and invited to host a one-day regional event. These groups and individuals were selected for their interest and expertise in social work education and on the basis of their ability to bring together a diverse range of service users who reflected the wide and varied service user population. It must be recognised, however, that four groups cannot hope to reflect all geographical regions, but we sought to cover both urban and rural areas. One group was based in a large metropolis, another drew its contributors from a largely rural community, a third was semi-rural and the fourth was predominantly urban. Groups drew their participants from the South West, the South East, the Midlands and the North East of England.

3.1 Aim

The aim of the events was both to gain and share information. We wanted to help user-controlled organisations find out more about user involvement in social work education and to encourage them, if they were interested, in getting more involved. In addition we wanted to get an up-to-date picture of what was going on and what people thought about it.

3.2 Who took part?

Thirty-three service users and/or disabled people participated in the group discussions. Any materials used and all communication before and after the discussion days were consistent with ensuring equal access. All the venues used were accessible and participants were all asked what they would need to be able to participate as fully as possible. This included getting to and from the venue as well as during the event. All the group facilitators identified as disabled people and/or as service users.

All participants were encouraged to fill in an equal opportunities form that gave us the following information:

Gender	Ethnicity/ racial group	Religion/faith group	Age	Sexuality
21 women	24 White British	5 Catholic	2 Under 26	28 Heterosexual
12 men	1 Black British	2 Christian	13 27–60	5 Not stated
	2 Black Caribbean	1 Baptist	9 Over 60	
	1 Caribbean/ Chinese	4 Church of England	1 Not stated	
	5 Not stated	1 Methodist		
		1 Buddhist		
		19 Not stated		

3.3 Questions for the day

The focus of the discussion (while having some flexibility to enable people to highlight issues that particularly concerned them) was on the following questions that were discussed and agreed by the service user reference group (September 2008):

- What do you see as good practice in user involvement in social work education?
- Can you give examples of good practice?
- How do you measure good practice?
- What is being achieved from user involvement in social work education:
  — for service users?
  — for students?
- Is user involvement in social work education changing practice?
- What is being done to build capacity (for organisations and individuals) and what can helpfully be done to do this?
- What barriers are people facing in the way of good user involvement in social work education?

All participants were asked to complete an evaluation form and an equal opportunities form.

3.4 A report of the event

Each organisation produced a short accessible report of their event. They were asked to include as many direct quotes from people as possible. All contributions were anonymised so that nothing could be traced back to any individual participant or HEI.

3.5 Findings

This report highlights the findings from the four regional events. Producing one report in this way ensures anonymity and reinforces the key messages on which service users were in agreement. Indeed, there was a remarkable degree of consistency in what service users told us. This report is structured around the key themes and messages that participants identified.

3.5.1 What is good practice in service user involvement in social work education?

3.5.1.1 Being involved in all aspects of the course

Participants in all four of the regional consultation events agreed that involving service users in all aspects of the social work courses was an essential component of good practice:

> "Service users should be involved in all aspects of the degree programme throughout the course, and a range of people should be involved."

> "I consider the early involvement of users in social work education to be good practice."

> "From day one to work with students throughout their course."

> "You want to be involved right at the start. From interviewing applicants, delivering lectures, assessing students and evaluating students. It is important to be there having your perspective, having your say. Making students see you as a person."

> "It shouldn't even stop with the assessing of students. There should be some way that service users can be part of an ongoing evaluation of their social workers."

3.5.1.2 Challenging negative stereotypes

People were clear that service user involvement was a means by which negative cultural stereotypes of disabled people and service users could be challenged:

> "Our role in teaching [...] challenges perspectives of tutors as well as students."

> "Changing attitudes of students and social workers is an important role for service users that we feel we are able to achieve. Sharing practical experiences is necessary in order for service users to be seen as individuals. Challenging media stereotypes that are the basis of many students' initial perceptions."

> "There is a common discomfort at the way we are identified as 'service users' and that good practice involves finding ways to present a holistic view of ourselves and other service users to students."

> "Social workers don't see things from a service user's point of view, they see things from an organisational point of view. Everything comes down to 'wants' and 'needs' and they don't always see the human point of view."

> "When I first started working with the university, I found that most students thought that old people sat around and did nothing ... they need more contact with people of my age."

> "Up until now, being taught by someone with a disability is socially alien. This is promoting me as a person."

3.5.1.3 Communication

Service users were aware and concerned that for some students they were the first disabled people that the students had ever met. Service users explained that good communication was at the heart of good practice:

> "If they can't talk to you like you are equal to them, that you deserve respect and be treated as they would like to be treated, unless they can do that it is not good practice. Good practice is about talking and communicating right."

"Often the first place a social worker sees a client is in a hospital. In this setting they just don't get a flavour of what that person's life is like."

"If the only time they see you is when you are your most vulnerable, in a crisis situation, then that colours how they view you at other times. They don't see you just getting on with your life in a day-to-day kind of way. So they always talk to you like a patient or like you are pathetic."

In all the discussions people agreed that at the heart of good practice lay notions of equality, independence and rights.

3.5.1.4 Experts by experience

Service users explained that best practice would allow for service users to talk about their own experiences, their own perceptions and their own knowledge:

"What worked best was when mental health service users spoke about their own experiences and this was used to tease out legal and practice situations that might apply to that."

"We need to be seen as the ones that know best about what we need, what choices we want to make."

"Service users need to be there giving their own examples – a video alternative doesn't do justice. If you can't put someone in a box, with a label, then they become troublesome to deal with and that is challenging."

"They are looking at the disability not the person and that is what we are trying to change – not just going by the categorisation but respect for us as whole people."

"Unless you have service users involved throughout the course, you don't necessarily take on board that you are dealing with someone's life and the decisions that you make affect that life profoundly. You have got to listen to them, look at them and be aware of who they are, what they have been and what they could be."

3.5.1.5 Theory and practice

Service users see a clear distinction between what you learn in theory and what you can learn in practice from service users:

> "If you are dealing with a non-disabled lecturer you get the theory; by bringing in service users you get the practice, what is actually happening – not the myths reflected in the media."

> "I feel it is important and good practice for social work students to learn from real life experiences."

> "Theory is from books, it has its place but it is not what makes a good social worker, not an empathic one who listens and shows you how to empower you, your rights.... That comes from knowing and listening to other service users and realising, I think, that everyone can be a service user, we are human too."

3.5.1.6 Service user input

While all the groups agreed that there was a distinction between theory and practice, two of the groups also had discussions about service user input into course materials, and everyone agreed that this could be a positive contribution:

> "In particular if they have written guidelines on how to deal with certain situations, we should get to see them and be able to adjust them or make suggestions for improvement."

> "We can write about our experiences and what we want and that should be as much a part of their course as anything else."

> "You know you can be more than one thing. Like an academic and a service user!"

3.5.2 Examples of good practice

3.5.2.1 Examples

Service users reported many examples of good practice. Some came about with time: as service users and colleges developed trust in each other they felt more able to support each another. As these service users explain:

"Timing of sessions not to start at 9am. They have changed and it makes a big difference to service users who might have to do a lot of impairment-related things before they can leave their house, or perhaps they are reliant on a carer coming to give support before they can leave. It might be that they cannot travel in the rush hour. Anyway they have started our sessions later now as a result of listening to us."

"At first we only had minimum impact – I think they were a bit wary of us – the tutors and students. But I think it has been good for all of us and we have all learnt a lot."

Some service users were able to give specific examples of what they saw as good practice. These included:

"Holding social work open days can attract other service users to be involved, for example, a local refugee programme has been involved in such an event."

"When I was on interview panels, even though they knew a service user was involved they didn't look at me, so the next time we did a round of interviews I was the chair of the panel, so they had to direct their responses towards me and I could give feedback."

"One of the best things that happened was a workshop where we could get to know each other really well."

"When I introduce myself I refer to the fact that we all use services. When you sense that students are not quite sure of you, you pick on a subject like the social care of their grandmothers and virtually all of them can associate with that idea and gradually you get this relationship that is formed, as there is something in common."

"I did a case study with students, what actually happened and how would you deal with this differently. Nine times out of ten they would say that it was not a good example, and at the end I told them the example was me."

Others reported more general examples of good practice. These included:

- first-year students on work placement with service user-led organisations;
- service users and students working together, the student 'shadowing' the service user;

- service users becoming supervisors on a one-to-one basis;
- service users taking part in the practice assessment panels and boards;
- 'tracking' a student, meeting the student at various stages throughout the course;
- service users working as practice teachers and placement supervisors;
- service users taking part in quality assurance of programmes through being involved in reviews, for example by the GSCC;
- a second-year practice learning workshop has service users involved in the planning and delivery;
- seminars are run by service users;
- teaching by service users in each year of the course;
- working with students on assessments;
- portfolio assessment of first-year students;
- assessment by service users in the third year;
- service users are involved in assessment of portfolios – a real involvement in planning and delivery.

Other examples of good practice highlighted the way that some universities, despite acknowledged difficulties, were able to financially help service users:

- the university supports and funds service users/trainers, for example through sorting out transport and providing food;
- policies have now been drawn up for claiming expenses for users, for example PA (personal assistance) costs, transport, etc;
- transport costs incurred to be covered by the university or college;
- contractual agreements between the two parties.

3.5.2.2 Ensuring diversity

People reported that it was important that the diverse range of people who make up the service user population was reflected in the service users delivering training and contributing to social work education:

> "Having diverse range of service users with different disabilities or experiences is important."

> "You can't just have the well educated, those that go to universities service users taking part. You have to have the real people who have lived all their lives as service users. It must be everyone can take part and tell it like it is."

> "It is not academic to us!"

"People make all kinds of assumptions about disabled people. And the same with Black and Asian people. That might not be true. The only way to find out is to listen to what we all have to say."

"You don't want someone saying 'Oh I've never met someone like you before'. That's not very helpful, is it? But if they've thought about these things when they are learning then they might not say it or they might have met someone in the training like them."

3.5.3 How do we measure good practice?

3.5.3.1 Evaluation

It was clear in all the groups that service users welcomed some sort of evaluation process:

"Evaluation is very important."

"Evaluate ALL sessions and work with students."

"We need to look at what has been achieved or not."

"The university should evaluate each year of the course and lecturers need to evaluate service users' input and note what works and what does not work."

"It is a two-way evaluation process."

"Appraisals for social workers by disabled people should be built into performance evaluation for each social worker."

3.5.3.2 Feedback

Service users had many practical examples of measuring good practice. They equally had many suggestions for improving how it could be measured. These included:

"Feedback should be actively sought from students and clients on placements for example, through using feedback forms."

"Need to formalise feedback on service user involvement."

> "There needs to be changes made to the way academics respond to service users – staff receive feedback from students."

One of the service user facilitators wrote of their group's discussion:

> "Measurement issues were problematic, but there was strong support across the group for measures to assist setting standards in service users' skills in social work education and the level of support offered to them to participate. The main discussion was around some assessed foundational service user training, particularly in areas such as assertiveness, presentation skills, confidentiality and mentoring students regarding practice experience. Standards of support varied, particularly regarding the encouragement of service users who might not normally become involved, such as people with multiple impairments, or ethnic minorities. This led the group to support the use of benchmarking."

By 'benchmarking' this group was referring to the importance of establishing an ongoing framework for delivering good practice for the effective, supportive and meaningful involvement of service users in HEIs, who were contributing to social work practitioners' education. Other groups made further points:

> "... benchmarking is a method which should be used on a continual basis as best practices are always evolving."

> "Some sort of overall benchmark system that we [service users] can all use to compare HEIs and universities' ways, methods and support that they give service users who they want to involve."

Others suggested:

> "You need to give specific feedback evaluation sheets for service users as the feedback helps service users decide whether their training is working."

There was a shared recognition that many service users needed support and training. It was strongly felt that the providers of social work education should be evaluated on the support they made available to service users.

> "There needs to be an assessment of social work courses with regard to the standards of support offered to service users involved with social

work education, like with the star rating of NHS hospitals, which tells service users how much support they might get."

"Getting involved in one college or university does not mean that all colleges and universities do the same things. Some offer much more help to service users than others. Service users should be able to get that information."

Making training available for service users should be included in all involvement initiatives. It was strongly felt that this needed to be assessed as well as any other aspects of the course.

It was felt in one of the groups that:

"A key thing that should be assessed is basic 'people skills' such as listening and empathising as this is a central part of being a good social worker."

However, it was also acknowledged that this can be very difficult to assess:

"How can you come up with a measure of good people skills? This is difficult to assess."

Another group suggested:

"There should be some kind of satisfaction form that assesses the quality of the social worker and also whether they have taken on board their teaching from their client."

"The satisfaction form gives both the opportunity to feed back and suggest improvements but also to feed back positive experiences and practice that works."

"We could look at the way that 'listening' organisations like the Samaritans or Victim Support rate their staff or rate good practice and learn from them as they know about the appraisal of good practice in listening and empathising ... these are the skills we should be assessing, we should look to the experts in this and apply the same assessments to social worker good practice."

"Yes, we can develop a system of assessing success with other organisations like Victim Support."

"Things like star systems don't give a true representation of the quality of care, the local authority pays more attention to that than the quality of care."

3.5.4 What is being achieved from service user involvement in social work education?

3.5.4.1 For service users

All participants believed that service user involvement in social work education was a positive step towards giving service users more say and control in the services they used.

"Service users are now at the forefront of training, which has not happened before. Previously the Diploma in Social Work in some higher education institutions did not involve service users or carers. Service users' feedback shows there is an improvement in the quality of social workers since the new degree started."

"There is feeling that where there is service user involvement all the way through the social work course graduates have received higher quality training."

"Service users had previously been told by academics that 'you are too wrapped up in your disability and disability issues', and this does not happen so much now."

All participants said that their involvement meant that both service users and potential social workers developed a deeper understanding of each other's perspective:

"Service users are learning more about social work education."

"Service users working with students can create an open and respectful culture."

"You get mutual respect for each other, almost like two professionals."

"My perspective is on the relationship between service users and students that it is a partnership, because to some extent there is a barrier between service users and students, when I walk in it is very much about breaking down the barriers between us and them. It is more humane and there is this reciprocity of interests what we can

give each other. I really do feel the way forward is by partnership working."

"The thing that I believe is achieved from user involvement in social work education is the early contact and the opportunity that users have to impress upon the students the human side to their work."

"I was able to get to know the services, the people working in it and their thinking, so I found that beneficial. You find out about the other side of the coin when you are in these discussions."

"I'd had bad experiences of social workers, but when I joined the degree development panel, building the degree, then I understood why there are constraints that they have to work within, why social services can't always achieve what a service user would like them to achieve."

Participants said that being involved in social work education gave them a better understanding of the processes and procedures in social services organisations. It gave them an insight into the professional's world that they considered made them more tolerant of the difficulties faced by frontline workers.

Participants reported that they believed their involvement:

"... would act as a way of removing barriers, especially attitudinal barriers and promoting the social model that puts the users at the centre of their care."

"There would be better awareness on both sides on what the real issues are."

"It would make me more confident that the social worker knows what they're doing as they've had input from disabled people."

"Having contact with social workers would ensure we're more likely to be treated like people, not cases."

"There would be more trust. It would make disabled people more likely to speak out and say what they really need without being scared of reprisals or being put in a home."

"We're the experts in our care – we know more about our care than social workers do, we should be involved."

3.5.4.2 For social work students

Service users said that the benefits for social work students of meeting with, listening to and working with 'real-life' service users and disabled people were enormous. All participants agreed that it would help challenge stereotypes and equip students to become good social workers:

"Students gain more insight through first-hand knowledge of service users."

"It gives them an early introduction and insight into the kind of people and circumstances that they will be dealing with."

"It's about learning to work together in the real world."

"It has opened up students' minds."

"Sharing service users' perspective of what works and what does not work so well."

"Meeting service users – some have never met or worked with a disabled person."

"Raising their awareness on all aspects of social work."

"Learning real-life experiences from service users."

"People can make a difference, they can make social workers more empathetic and we can also offer support to them."

"It would make the training more relevant."

"It would break down the 'them and us' mentality, as we're being involved."

"It makes the training more rounded and there's more potential for job satisfaction as the social worker knows what the disabled person wants and will get it right … they can then implement this with other clients."

Students can learn empathy from direct contact:

"The only time we meet social workers is in a 'crisis situation' so it would help if we could meet in a calmer and different situation where we're both getting something from each other – this would help break down the stigma that disabled people have all these needs and nothing to offer."

"Contact with each other breaks down stereotypes on both sides."

3.5.5 Is user involvement in social work education changing practice?

The overall answer to this question from all the participants was a rather cautious "Yes". It was acknowledged that involvement was still in its infancy but practice was beginning to change.

One person recognised that the service had changed for the better, but went on to say:

"I believe it's too early to say. But I am hoping it is due to our being involved."

As has been noted previously, service users felt that their involvement in social work education would influence, in a positive way, social work practice:

"I've had a social worker for over 30 years and there has been a lot of improvement in the service, this might be because service users have been involved."

A group facilitator wrote:

"Service user involvement has become a familiar practice in universities and services where it was rare only a few years ago. There was hope [within the group] that in the future this would result in better informed practice teachers and service managers, and that service users might be employed in more university jobs."

Many service users agreed with the following comment:

"I really think that service users are definitely the people who should deliver social work education. Because we know what it is about. It is not an option for us. The sooner we get our acts together and have the confidence to deliver really good, really dynamic sessions the students

> will appreciate us as equals and that is the only way their practice will change. That is the way to equality."

The participants in the regional groups discussed how the training and education of social workers had changed in recent years:

> "I think there is more of a willingness by students to accommodate service users in delivering the course. There is more of a mindset involved for the acceptance of us. So there are times when practice has been influenced for the better."

Another person reported that:

> "At one higher education institution students have a 'humanistic' attitude and have a better understanding of issues. Social work course students, where there has been input from the service users, 'work with' rather than 'do for' service users."

> "Attitudes have changed with user involvement. But it has been, and it is, slow."

> "I look back a decade ago, when I was involved with advocacy, involvement was rare, but things have moved on dramatically. Service users from any sort of background are now being accepted as contributors, if only by people being accustomed to them being present when they are going on training exercises."

There was a discussion about being involved with others not limiting involvement to social workers' education. Someone said:

> "Where I live service users are involved with careers fairs with schoolchildren to encourage them to think about social care as a career. They have got to be targeted young, and we have had a great response."

Another discussion focused on the wider ramifications of mixing socially with the social work students:

> "I think by students getting involved with informal discussions with service users over lunch and coffee more can be achieved than when a service user comes in and leaves after their allotted spot."

Three of the groups went on to discuss an additional change to the new social work degree. HEIs now admit students straight from school, at the age of 18. Participants said:

> "Some service users think there can be a difference between mature and younger students. We hear service users complaining that 'A social worker who is too young does not have enough life experience'. However, some mature students 'can be stuck in their ways' – this varies from individual to individual. Maturity is not necessarily age-related."

> "MA and MSc students are looking to be more academic and there is a gap of understanding. Their first degree may be unrelated to social work although MA and MSc students are expected to have had two years' relevant practical experience."

> "We find that there are more mature social workers around now who have experienced life and maybe are more accepting of service users as a result."

> "It is important that students have 'people skills' – academic skill alone is not enough."

All the service users we talked to thought that service user involvement in social work education was a very positive step for both service providers and practitioners and for service users. No one thought that the involvement of service users in social work education was the end of the story. People were very clear that this was the first step on a long road. This service user summed it up:

> "You could say they're on a journey from London to Edinburgh, they've got as far as Finchley [very much still in London]! "

3.5.6 What is being done to build capacity (for organisations and individuals) and what can helpfully be done to do this?

Participants recognised that there was still a real need for capacity building. They had many suggestions for how this could be carried out, which included:

3.5.6.1 Training and development

Offering training and development opportunities was identified as a real need for many service users:

> "Universities should be offering training and developing transferable skills that may support people in other areas – for example in paid or voluntary work."

> "Free training and advice for service users to build on their skills and confidence in order for them to be effective and a positive influence on students."

> "More training for service users would be helpful."

Ideas around training are explored further under 'Question 7: Barriers to involvement' in Section 3.5.7.

3.5.6.2 Adequate resources

All the groups discussed the benefits they thought could occur if money was given to user-controlled organisations by the government rather than to the academic institutions:

> "A government directive funding should be made available for service users' involvement."

> "There should be more funding for research for smaller organisations so they can find out about ways they can get involved."

> "Service user groups shouldn't be owned by the universities. If they are there is a danger that you just go along with what they say because you are dependent on their money. If user groups had their own financial resources to get them involved they could get involved on equal terms."

> "User groups need to be independent. We need financial independence otherwise our involvement is dependent on the colleges and 'you don't bite the hand that feeds'."

A group facilitator wrote:

"The group were in agreement that there should be more resources channelled to user-led organisations and more investigative work to see how they could get involved."

3.5.6.3 Independence

Three of the consultation groups recognised that many service user-controlled groups needed capacity building and development help to enable them to become independent:

"Service user groups may not currently be developed enough to manage their own funding, but there is a will for them to do this."

"Service users and carers may want to become 'an organisation' but this is not always easy. Some examples of user-controlled or user-led organisations which could be developed to manage local user involvement include the Disability Equality Forum in Bristol, and Rethink also in Bristol."

Participants talked about carer and user forums that had developed through the HEI:

"The service user and carer forums could become independent entities and manage the service user involvement."

"Our local higher education institution is looking at the service user consultative group becoming an entity and their vice-chancellor is very supportive of this."

One person from an active service user-controlled organisation suggested:

"All the different user groups at our organisation should get involved. Different types of social work training should be channelled to the right group within our organisation, for example the youth project could get involved – we'd be happy to go into colleges and speak to social workers and talk about what young disabled people want and need."

Other people agreed:

"The InGroup (Individual Budgets User Group) could get involved – they could train social workers on Individual Budgets. Both what they are and the practical aspect of receiving care in this new way."

"Most social workers don't have a clue about Individual Budgets. They even mucked up my Direct Payment. If they had had training in this from disabled people who are on Individual Budgets, it might help."

3.5.6.4 Communication

Two-way communication between universities and service user organisations was, according to the participants of this research, absolutely essential if effective user involvement in social work education was to be successful:

"We need to open channels of communication between the social work colleges and service user organisations."

"Communication in every sense, creating better awareness of how they can get involved, but also managing expectations."

People were also clear that there needed to be communication between service user organisations:

"There should be a central repository of information – all information could be pooled and made available explaining how small organisations can get involved."

"There should be information available for professionals too."

"There should be someone in post to coordinate our members getting involved in training social workers."

"We want to be part of the social workers' training from day one and be involved with writing the structure of their course and also be on hand to offer guidance and support through every stage of their training and after."

"Service user groups working with different higher education institutions in the same areas could join together and this might increase service user involvement and broaden diversity."

"We'd have to make sure it wasn't a tick box, we need to be involved in a structured way."

"Social workers use our user organisation as an escape route when they don't want to deal with an issue. They should really be made to understand what our group does. It should be part of professional development, not a box tick."

"There could be some kind of ombudsman where good and bad practice can be reported and advocacy in social worker care can be accessed."

3.5.7 What barriers are people facing in the way of good user involvement in social work education?

In the previous report, *User involvement in social work education* (Branfield, 2007), service users agreed that the following were the major barriers to effective involvement in social work education:

- Academics do not attach high enough value to service users' knowledge.
- The culture in some universities needs to change.
- Access requirements are not always fully met.
- Many service user organisations lack capacity and infrastructure.
- Training for service users and their organisations is lacking.
- Payment policies and practices need improvement.
- The benefit system discourages involvement.

In the three years since the first consultation days were held in 2005, little seems to have changed. The barriers service users identify remain the same.

3.5.7.1 Academics do not attach high enough value to service users' knowledge and service user involvement

In the previous consultation with service users who had experience of contributing to social work education, a major barrier identified was the 'slot' that their contribution was fitted into. So, for example, people said things such as:

"... sometimes it is easy to get involved but only to a certain degree. They seem to think that we can do disability, but that is just covering

> that slot, if you want to be involved in all levels from choosing applicants to assessing them it is a different story"

and

> "Every now and again they ask us in to do a slot. It is always on disability equality, or 'awareness' as they call it, and it is always at short notice."

While this was not so widely discussed with participants, some service users commented that:

> "There is a need for everybody to support the involvement of service users and equity of involvement."

> "Decision makers are not accessible to service users."

Others reported that:

> "The current system of educating social workers is a barrier as we have had no idea that we could get involved or how to access information about it."

> "A barrier is the fact we weren't asked in the first place – you don't ask, you don't get! We didn't know we could get involved."

> "The system is the problem, there's no opportunity for two-way interchange with educating social work students."

Participants felt that HEIs needed to let service users know, and in particular service user organisations know, that they wanted to involve them in the education of social workers.

> "There's a lack of information about the education process for social work students, we're on the outside."

3.5.7.2 The culture in universities

Most participants still reported that the culture of some academic institutions was not supportive of user participation and that there was a tendency to prioritise academic knowledge over that gained through experience.

Service users reported that:

> "There is an 'us and them' culture which is not helpful."
>
> "They tend to think that they know best."
>
> "Lecturers do not always take service users seriously."
>
> "If the tutor is not supportive and doesn't understand our perspective the students won't think what we say is important either."
>
> "Some lecturers still feel intimidated by service users."
>
> "There are preconceived ideas on what lecturing the students should look like."
>
> "There can be academic prejudice – the class structures are still evident. Elitism can be a barrier to involvement. [Name] is a top-down institution – not many service users are involved."

One group discussed the idea that user involvement becomes less important to students the longer they are at university, that means:

> "The later service user involvement comes in training, the harder it becomes. Year one students want involvement from service users, second year students slightly less so and third year students do not look for involvement with service users."
>
> "Post-qualifying students are generally not interested in service user involvement."

3.5.7.3 Access

Access remained a key issue for some service users, with access requirements routinely left unmet and misunderstood:

> "There are no accessible toilets in the building although you can get in the building you have to go miles to another building if you want to use the loo."
>
> "Okay so the main teaching rooms are accessible but the library is not. Not for me anyway."

"We use ground rules. One is that people say their name before they speak. It is difficult for me (as a visually impaired person) if they don't – it can be very confusing."

"They use air conditioning and so there is always this background noise which I find very difficult."

"Access is still seen as being flat access for wheelchair users. It is that, but it is a lot more than that."

"Universities and colleges don't always have reservable parking spaces. This makes me very anxious."

Members of one group felt that accessibility of facilities and premises as well as non-accessible practices was an issue:

"Just getting into colleges can be hard."

"What about lack of accessible transport? And also the issue of travel costs, these should be reimbursed."

"There are barriers to accessible information. This should be included in different formats."

3.5.7.4 Payment policies and practices

All participants recognised that they should be paid for their involvement in social work education. However, the systems in place for paying service users remained a barrier to service user involvement:

"Appropriate and timely payment of expenses is helpful."

"Some finance departments are inflexible but we, that is, service users, also recognise this may be because finance departments have a need for transparency."

"Not being paid on the day can be a barrier to involvement; in particular expenses should be paid, preferably in cash, on the day. One higher education institution pays on the day of involvement. That is good practice but doesn't seem to happen everywhere."

"A system of payment in vouchers is no longer an option but it used to be."

"Payment is only given for the time spent on the interview panel or with students, no payment is given for reading CVs or guidance notes in preparation, where social services employees did that in work time and getting paid, I am not."

"Payments are a problem. For some people it took about four or five weeks to get their payments through and for some that had included their taxi fares."

"If I was in a position to accept payment, I would want it to be at the same level as the person sitting next to me [from social services] to acknowledge that I was an expert in my own field."

"Payment and travel reimbursement delays cause more hardship for service users than other guest lecturers. The inequalities in level of income is felt when service user consultants are involved in collaboration with salaried social services professional consultants."

The barriers to involvement for those service users receiving benefits have been well documented (Turner and Beresford, 2005; CSCI, 2007), and again people spoke of these difficulties:

"For those on benefits, they need better advice about the effects, monetary payment or payments in kind can be made. Where payments cannot be accepted, then a small gesture gift is appreciated, but not always offered."

"Payment could seriously affect receipt/eligibility to, for example, state benefits."

"Some cannot accept payment as it will affect their benefits and they accept that, but it wouldn't have cost them much to buy a potted plant, or a box of chocolates or something just to say thank you, we appreciate the time you have given. But you don't even get that, do you."

"You are doing a full day's work but at the end of the day you are not paid, there should be some sort of acknowledgement. You can even risk losing your benefits because they might decide you can now work full time. It is a worry for many of us."

3.5.7.5 Lack of capacity and training for service users

For some service users a lack of training meant that they did not have the confidence to participate in social work education:

> "There may be a lack of confidence, particularly on the part of people becoming newly involved, for some service users going into a university setting. There is 'a need for selling ourselves'!'"

> "Users need to be trained further to enable them to take part effectively."

> "There should be more training and support for users to let them get involved, whatever they might need to be able to get involved."

> "There should be more support for users in general to get them involved and trained properly."

3.5.7.6 Specific barriers facing seldom-heard service users

Participants clearly thought it important to address issues of diversity and difference in social work education:

> "There is a need for greater diversity of service users involved in the social work programme."

> "Service users come from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, with different belief systems, cultural understandings, sexuality … so we can't expect one service user to represent all service users but we should expect a diverse range of service users to be involved in teaching and training social work students and practitioners."

> "You have got to attract younger people and offer them something like a career structure to keep them involved."

It was equally clear that service users understood the difficulties in addressing issues of diversity and difference.

3.5.7.7 Unaffiliated service users

Perhaps the largest group of 'seldom-heard' service users were those who were not networked:

"It is quite difficult to engage with people who are not part of a network, we find when we are trying to engage them that there is no way of contacting them."

"If they are not networked with any other groups it is really difficult to reach them."

"People in residential care homes are not involved in social work education on the whole."

"The only way is to go to where people are: day care centres, shop mobility, leafleting places where people might go."

In work Shaping Our Lives has done elsewhere the most successful way of engaging people who are seldom heard is by going to them. It is word of mouth that gets people involved. Service user-controlled organisations are often well placed to facilitate peer-to-peer contact.

3.5.7.8 Black and minority ethnic service users

Participants in all the consultations discussed the cultural barriers that specifically related to black and minority ethnic involvement. People said:

"It can be difficult to engage young black men because there is a distrust of authorities."

"To get some ethnic minorities or people with a hearing impairment to be involved, you need to have sufficient money to employ interpreters. There is a hidden cost which is also a barrier."

"You can employ people from minority groups to assist to engage with members of hard-to-reach groups, but this takes a long time. There is an example of an ethnicity officer in the Mosaic centre in Peterborough."

"The groups that still don't want to get involved and are resisting – that's a barrier. There needs to be more work done on selling the benefits of including disabled people. They need to know the benefits of aiding integration."

4 Section 2: The wider picture

4.1 Scoping exercise

In an attempt to develop a wider national picture of service users and service user organisations' involvement in social work education we used the winter 2008 Shaping Our Lives newsletter mail-out to ask some questions. We requested readers to let Shaping Our Lives know if they had experience of involvement in social work education, and if so, what that was, and if not, whether they would like the opportunity to become involved. We also asked if they had any views or comments they would like to make, in general, about service users' involvement in social work education. This request went to approximately 1,300 organisations and individuals.

Seven service users/organisations responded. We believe that the unusually low rate of response (to a Shaping Our Lives request) was due to the time of year and seasonal festivities. What people told us is reported below (see Section 4.3 in particular).

4.2 Approaching our members

In addition to the mail-out (above), we emailed 300 service user-controlled organisations that were members of the Shaping Our Lives Networking website, SOLNET.

This is what we said:

> **"Dear SOLNET member**
> **Service user involvement in social work education**
>
> Since the new social work degree qualification was introduced in 2003–4, there has been a requirement to involve service users and carers in the training of social workers. Shaping Our Lives has been working with the Social Care Institute for Excellence as part of a project to implement plans to support more service user participation in social work education.
>
> We know that in some areas service users and our organisations are working in partnership with colleges and universities to provide service user input into this training. We know that there are some instances of good practice. But we also know that in other places it is not working so well.

> Shaping Our Lives would really like to hear from service users and service user organisations who have experience of being involved in social work education, or who would like to be involved but haven't yet had the chance. All information will be useful."

Shaping Our Lives had a good response to this. Around 40 individuals and/or organisations contacted us and all wanted to be kept informed as to any developments in this work.

The responses both to the mail-out and from SOLNET members are reported below.

4.3 Findings

The responses fell into three categories:

- those who were not involved but who would like to be (24)
- those who had some involvement (32)
- those who were very involved (14).

A significant proportion of the respondents were service user-controlled organisations who were unaware that service user involvement was now a compulsory component of social work education. These respondents were also unsure of how to go about becoming involved. As these participants put it:

> "We still don't know who to go to in order to get information, to get involved."

> "I would love to get involved. Me and a friend set up and run a service user-led drop-in for people with mental health issues."

> "At the moment we are not involved with social work education apart from having occasional social workers visiting as part of their training."

> "We did have a visit from [name] university about being involved more with training but have not heard any more."

> "We would like to have more of a say in the training of social workers."

> "As far as I am aware we have not had any involvement but some of our members may be interested in this and if you wish we could put an article in our newsletter."

"We have not tried to get involved in social work education – we were not aware there was such an opportunity. We would certainly like to find out more about opportunities to get involved in social work training."

"We would definitely like to have more say in training social workers."

"I am keen to find out a bit more about how we might get our service users involved with social work courses."

"Please could you send further information on this?"

"We do not currently get involved in social work education – but would like to if the opportunity arose."

"We have developed a model for user-driven work which we've had published and our users have also written their own book called *User-driven* about their experiences."

"We haven't as yet tried to get involved in social work education; we are quite a new group and we have had other priorities. I would have to ask the members if they would like to get involved with this. I feel it is likely that they would want to get involved as it is often very apparent that some social workers have very little awareness of the challenges that people with learning disabilities face in their day-to-day lives."

"My organisation would love to take up this. I was not aware of this. As you well know many national organisations get this kind of information but it is not always given to grass-root ones."

"The older people I work with have not been involved in this yet, but think it is a very good idea! I would like to be kept up to date with your progress."

There is an obvious need for information about the involvement of service users in social work education to get to user-controlled organisations.

The largest group of respondents were service users who had had some involvement in social work education. Their experience of this varied considerably:

"We completed a small piece of work with a London college which was fed back to social work students on their end-of-year case studies."

"Hello, yes I do know that a trainee social worker shadowed one of our service user involvement work managers for several months. I have also taken part in one social work development focus group. Not a lot, but something. I think I might have been able to do more as a service user, but have not been able to get myself accepted as attending with my companion pet – though have been able to attend [another university] for another subject."

"I have been asked to become involved with training for social workers at [name] university. This will take place in March, so I cannot comment on how it will work out."

"We have a social work student on placement with us at the moment. We are co-located with another charity; at present they are providing the practice assessor support so the student is doing some work with them and some with us (this means we don't get the placement fee). I will be doing a practice assessor course later this year so that we can take students when we move into our own offices later this year."

"Taking on a student can be quite hard when you are a small group but we do feel we have a lot to offer."

"I have worked for 15 years in the disability field. I now work as a consultant running my own businesses as an advocate for disabled people as well as a business working for my local council as a family group coordinator. This job is working with social services and social workers in dealing with family issue. These issues range from very complex issues through to family issues dealing with breakdown of the family. I also am the chair to a charity. This is a charity that seeks to raise issues concerning disability as well as promote disability awareness. I'm always looking for new projects that deal with empowering the disabled community."

"We are currently involved in the selection and recruitment of social workers at [name] university. We are also involved in the induction of the new social work students. We have offered our services to be part of the teaching of social work students but are informed that the teaching time is too tight for the teaching of the required elements and that there is no space in the curriculum for any additional elements."

"We would be keen to be involved in the teaching of social work students. We already do some teaching and are part of the training for police new recruits so it is something we are already experienced in providing."

The smallest group of responses came from service users who gave examples of where involvement was working well:

"We have been involved in a social work degree course, providing training by service users at first, and then widening this out to other aspects of the course over recent years. I have a feeling that our early input was before the requirement was in place."

"We have a number of placements for social work students. I have personally worked with approximately six in my time working as a practitioner and feel that the general consensus has been that they end up being integral members of that team. They always take a special interest in the service users and their specific needs offering advice and practical solutions where possible and signposting when they haven't been able to. This sentiment has been such that, where possible regarding capacity issues, there have been agreements with local universities secured for places for students."

"We were involved in a pilot run by Skills for Care around testing out a training course for service users and carers who were interested."

"We have also assisted in supporting other organisations of service users in involvement since our early involvement. So service user involvement through partnership between our organisation and the university has been successful for a number of years now. The feedback from students and lecturers has always been positive."

"We also provide placements for social work students – year one and two. Our experiences have been excellent but like all partnership working this has not happened overnight."

"Since 2006 I have been involved with [name] university as a service user member of their recruitment and assessment panel in their Institute for Applied Social Care Studies. In this capacity I have been involved in student interviews at application; fitness to practise; and post-qualifying assessment. Additionally I've delivered talks to students on service user perceptions and partnership working, including travelling to Holland in April this year to talk to Dutch students about

my experience as a service user involved in the education of social work students in England. Indeed I will be making a joint presentation in London, at a university-sponsored conference on this experience in February 09."

"We have given training to social work students at two universities. This has been positive and we have had good feedback from the students and have been paid to do the training. We would like to do more work like this, provided the group were paid to do this. Our members believe the group should be paid to do any training or be involved in educating social workers. The money they receive goes to further the work of the group as a whole – not to individuals. This is what the group have decided and agreed themselves. We think this is very important work. The group are keen that social work students understand life from the point of view of people with learning difficulties and should experience people with learning difficulties as trainers rather than only as people who use services."

"We have had both students on placement directly with them and students on placement with another organisation who spend a day a week with us. They have an arrangement with someone who is a practice teacher to do long arm supervision and they manage the placements and the students through their monthly meetings. Some of the members have also been on a course about supervising social work students on placement."

It is clear that service users welcome the opportunity to become involved and have their say in the training of social workers:

"I think it has to make all the difference. It has been so easy for social workers not to see us as being like them, but as something completely different ... a freak of nature or something. But now we have the chance to teach them, let them see we share the same hopes and fears and that stuff. If you cut me do I not bleed and all that jazz."

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Appendix 1: Brief for regional events

Background

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has been funded by the Department of Health (DH) to implement action plans to support service user and carer participation in social work education. The project involves creating a national forum for service users and carers in social work education, promoting the exchange of good practice, and testing out how service user and carer groups experienced in social work education can support the involvement of seldom-heard groups, thereby widening participation.

The project complements the work of the social work education programme providers, the General Social Care Council (GSCC), Skills for Care (S4C), the Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee and the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work.

The action plans for supporting and widening service user and carer participation in social work education are based on the recommendations of the service user and national reference group hosted by SCIE and Shaping our Lives, and on the findings from regional consultation events arranged by Shaping Our Lives (Common Aims: Proposal to DH, SCIE and Shaping Our Lives, 2005). The recommendations cover what the universities, service user and carer organisations and government could do to promote participation. The national reference group achieved a consensus that some resources for capacity building should be channelled directly to service user and carer-controlled organisations, in addition to the funding that universities continue to need to meet the degree and post-qualifying requirements.

Regional events

We are inviting four regional service user organisations and/or networked individual service users to host a one-day regional event.

Why?

- The aim is both to gain information and share information. We want to help user-controlled organisations find out more about user involvement in social work education and encourage them, if they are interested, in getting more involved in it.

- We want to get an up-to-date picture of what is going on and what people think about it.

Who should be invited?

- Eight service users.
- We hope you can involve service users who are both involved in service user organisations and service users who may not be affiliated. The aim is a mix of both. We do want you to include people who are interested in these issues and who have something to contribute on them.
- A diverse and wide range of service users in terms of ethnicity, age, impairment, class, culture, sexuality, gender and so on. It might be that you will need to offer support to an individual so that they can be included in ways other than being part of a group discussion.

Materials and communication will be consistent with ensuring equal access

Questions for the day

The focus of the discussion while having some flexibility to enable people to highlight issues that particularly concern them will be:

- What do they see as good practice in user involvement in social work education?
- Can they give examples of good practice?
- How do they measure good practice?
- What is being achieved from service user involvement in social work education:
  — for service users?
  — for students?
- Is user involvement in social work education changing practice?
- What is being done to build capacity (for organisations and individuals) and what can helpfully be done to do this?
- What barriers are people facing in the way of good user involvement in social work education?

Please ensure that all participants are asked to complete an evaluation form and an equal opportunities form. Please return these to Shaping Our Lives.

A report of the event

Each organisation to produce a short accessible report from the event, covering the topics identified as headings and with as many direct quotes from people as possible; this should be no more than 4,000 words. Please note that you might need a note taker or a means of recording the event in order to accurately produce this report.

Shaping Our Lives will produce the final report that will consist of the four regional reports. This will be made available in appropriate formats to all participants.

Appendix 2: Guidance notes for facilitators

Thank you for agreeing to hold and run this event for Shaping Our Lives. We have written this paper in response to some questions that have been raised by some of the organisations holding these events. These are guidelines that have been developed with service users and are based on our own experience of running such events.

We suggest that the following procedures are followed:

Welcome to everyone.

Housekeeping: explain to everyone where the accessible toilets are, where the accessible fire exits are.

Timing: let people know what time you will be having a break for lunch and how long it will be and tell people what time the meeting will end. It is important to stick to these times.

Introductions: introduce yourself and ask people to briefly introduce themselves.

Ground rules: read the Shaping Our Lives ground rules. Ask if people are happy to work to these rules and if they want to add anything.

Equal opportunities monitoring: please ask everyone who attends to fill in the equal opportunities form. It is important for Shaping Our Lives to monitor this and it is important that we are able to give accurate information to our funders on this project, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). We need to know if we are excluding people from our work so that we can do something about it in the future. However, if people object to filling this form in, that is OK too.

Note taking and recording: the discussion will need to be recorded. It is up to the facilitator/report writer to do this, in whatever way is best for them. If you are going to tape record the discussion, which is, in our opinion the best way to do this, you must ask people if they are OK with that. Explain that it is just so that you can accurately report on the day's discussions and that the tape will be cleared after the report has been written. If you are using a palentypist or speech to text writer arrange for the transcript to be made available.

Questions: please introduce the project and the purpose of the day's event. We would like you to systematically work through the questions. *We would like you to ask all the questions*. If the discussion moves away from the questions but is related to the topic that is fine and should be encouraged. But it is important that you always return to the questions. *Please ask every question*.

Process notes: immediately after the event we would like you to write short process notes. This will contain your impressions of the meeting. What were the main points, the key issues from your point of view that emerged? Was it an optimistic meeting, were people all agreeing with each other or not? Process notes should also include a record of the number of service users present, the number of men and the number of women, age range, the number of people from black and minority ethnic communities, and range of services used. This need be no longer than half a page of A4.

Report writing: the report should be between 3,000 and 4,000 words. We would like the report to be framed around the questions. It is very important that the report includes the voices of service users. *Put in many quotes from service users who came to the meeting*. We would like the report to follow this structure:

(For example)

- Question 1: What do they see as good practice in service user involvement in social work education?

  (Bullet point main themes discussed, for example)

- Service users are involved at every stage from selection of students, all course work, placements and assessments

  (Direct quotes from service users illustrating this bullet point)

- A diverse range of service users participate in social work education

  (Quotes)

- Service users are paid a realistic and comparative salary for participating in the work

Any queries on the report writing or any other aspect of this work please contact Jenny: 0845 241 0383 jenny@shapingourlives.org.uk
Or Fran: 01225 868473 fran@shapingourlives.org.uk

Appendix 3: Department of Health requirements for social work training 2002

The 2002 Department of Health document, *Requirements for social work training*,* states that all providers must fulfil the following criteria:

Selection of students applying to go on degree courses

All providers must:

> "Ensure that representatives of stakeholders, particularly service users and employers, are involved in the selection process." [for students applying to go on degree courses]

Teaching, learning and assessment requirements

All providers must:

> "Ensure that all students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to ensure their safety to undertake practice learning in a service delivery setting. This preparation must include the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the experience of service users and the opportunity to shadow an experienced social worker."

> "Ensure that teaching and learning are continually updated to keep abreast of developments in legislation, Government policy and best practice."

Although the two points above in the 'Teaching, learning and assessment requirements' do not explicitly require service user involvement, given current thinking and best practice, user involvement ought be considered as an integral part of any provider's strategy to fulfil the requirements.

* www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4060262.pdf

General Social Care Council: www.gscc.org.uk

Appendix 4: Shaping Our Lives

Who we are

> "Shaping Our Lives National User Network's *vision* is of a society that is equal and fair, where all people have the same opportunities, choices, rights and responsibilities – a society where people have choice and control over the way they live and the support services they use."

Shaping Our Lives is a national independent user-controlled organisation.

Shaping Our Lives works with service users and their organisations. We work with a broad range of service users – this includes people with physical and/or sensory impairments, people with learning difficulties, older people, survivors/users of mental health services, people living with HIV/AIDS and other life-limiting conditions, people who use or have used alcohol and/or drug dependency services, and young people with experience of being 'looked after'. Shaping Our Lives places a particular emphasis on addressing issues of diversity, improving access and working to include *all* service users, of all backgrounds, whether or not they are involved with service user, or other, organisations.

We work closely with government and the independent sector, to further our aims and to support them to develop effective service user involvement.

We have the following aims:

- to support the development of local user involvement that aims to deliver better outcomes for service users;
- to facilitate service user involvement at a national level;
- to work across all user groups in an equal and accessible manner;
- to give a shared voice to user-controlled organisations;
- to improve the quality of support people receive;
- to enable groups to link to other user controlled groups;
- to develop links with world wide international user-controlled organisations.

Central to all the work that Shaping Our Lives undertakes is a commitment to making the service user voice heard. Shaping Our Lives views the perspectives, thoughts and ideas of service users, their research and experiential knowledge as central to service users getting the services they want.

When Shaping Our Lives was first established as a research project in 1996, there was recognition that for research to fulfil its empowering potential it needed to be embedded within a service user network. This would allow network members to be involved in every stage of the research including crucially, dissemination. Now, SOLNET, Shaping Our Lives' Networking website, offers the first national resource to enable networking between service users and their organisations as well as health and social care commissioners, providers and researchers.

You can find SOLNET at www.solnetwork.org.uk

Shaping Our Lives general website is: www.shapingourlives.org.uk

BM Box 4845
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Developing user involvement in social work education

All SCIE publications and resources are free.

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