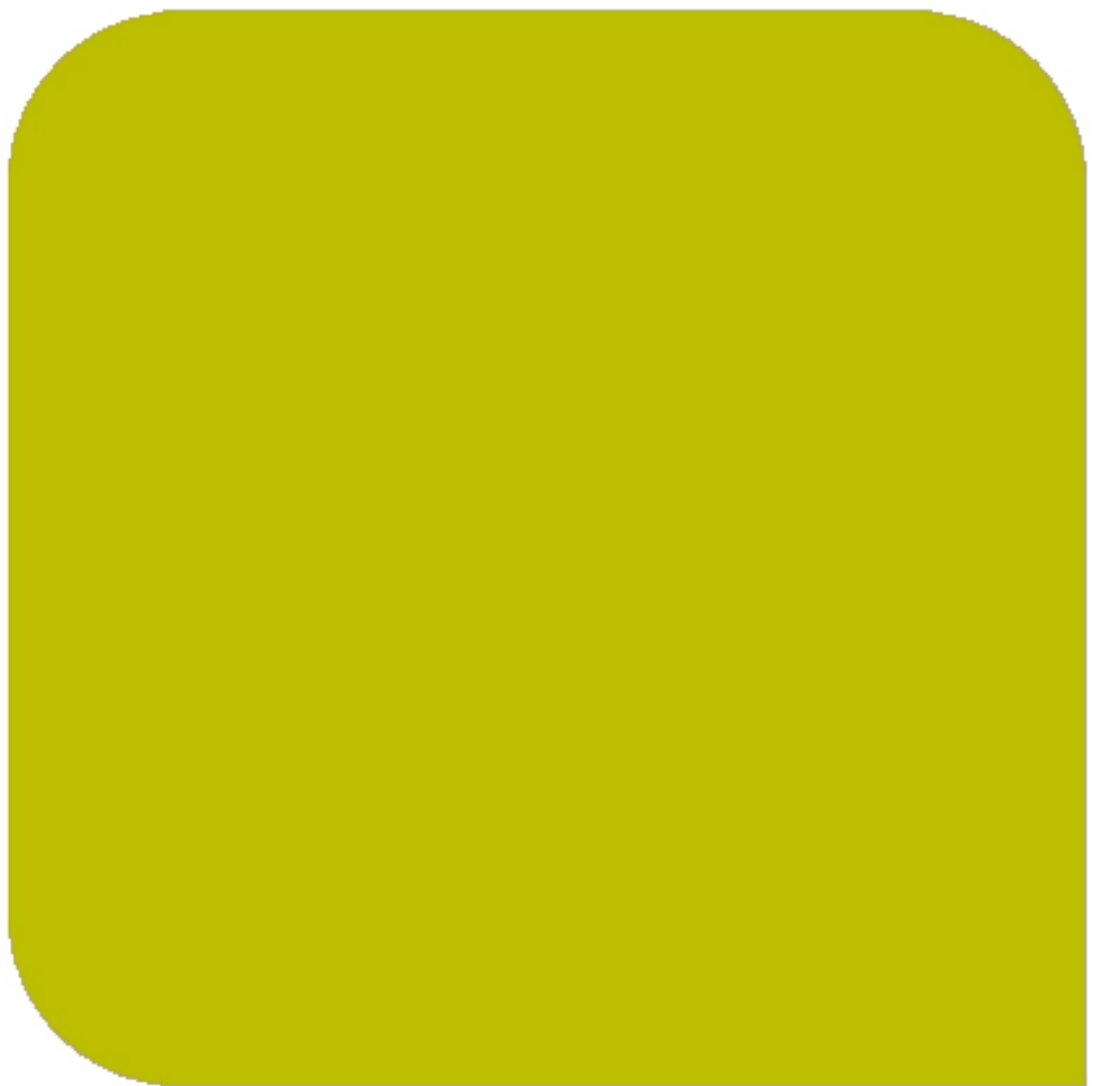


The learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work in social work education



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The learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work in social work education

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Introduction

Partnership work refers to partnership with people who use services and their carers, students, agency colleagues and other professions. This guide draws on findings from SCIE's '[Knowledge review 10: The learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work](#)'.(1) There were two main elements to this review:

- a systematic knowledge review of international literature and research on the learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work in social work education, with an analysis of 119 papers
- a practice survey of approaches to the learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work in social work programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, involving analysis of programme documentation, telephone interviews and focus groups.

Although the review drew on evidence and policy in Scotland, the survey did not include Scotland as it does not fall within the remit of SCIE. Further details of the methodology are given in [Knowledge review 10](#).

The central focus of the knowledge review was on the teaching, learning and assessment of partnership work and the development of partnership practice competence. Initial discussions with SCIE clarified that partnership in education delivery should be included in this resource guide only when these developments focused on learning related to partnership work. However, this boundary proved difficult to draw and the guide provides examples of the varied approaches to understanding 'partnership work' which emerged in research and practice.

It is not the purpose of the guide to prescribe the content of partnership education or how it should be approached. Indeed, the knowledge review identified that there is no one right way to approach the task of developing students' learning about partnership work at qualifying level. However, it did identify a number of key issues to be addressed by those involved in developing knowledge, skills and values at qualifying level for partnership in social work practice. These then form key choices for educators engaged in designing, teaching or assessing partnership work to consider. Case studies of how educators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are already approaching some of these issues are provided as examples to inform university-level teaching in the classroom and in practice. Post-qualifying programmes are not part of the scope of this guide.

A note on 'partnership work' and interpersonal education'

The knowledge review examined partnership work where this referred to studies of education for partnership work with users and carers, students, practice assessors, agency stakeholders (such as social care practitioners and managers), and interprofessional education where there was a clear focus on partnership work. In 2007 SCIE commissioned a separate report on interprofessional education.(2)

Who this guide is for

This resource guide is primarily designed to be of use to classroom- or practice-based educators involved in teaching and assessing partnership work to social work students at qualifying level. This includes lecturers and practice educators as well as people who use services and their carers. It will also be useful to other audiences, including: educators from related disciplines teaching partnership work; classroom and practice educators at postqualifying levels; external examiners and others involved in quality assurance of qualifying education; and, to employers and managers.

The purpose of this guide

The knowledge review proposed a number of key issues for social work educators to address. These may be phrased as six questions:

- What do we mean by 'partnership work'?
- Why teach partnership work?
- What does teaching about partnership work include?
- How is partnership work taught?
- Who should teach partnership work?
- How can students be assessed on partnership work?

To support the design, delivery, monitoring and review of education for partnership work in the social work degree, this resource guide explores these issues in four ways. First it summarises the key messages from Knowledge review 10 [Knowledge review 10](#), crystallising the findings from the knowledge review and the practice survey. It highlights what is known and not yet known about education for partnership work. Alongside this, the guide provides examples of good practice in education for partnership work, offering ideas that can be built on. These examples were identified through discussions with educators, people who use services and their carers, practitioners, managers and, not least, students on social work programmes.

The guide then summarises how knowledge, skills and values could be organised to provide opportunities for students to learn partnership work, paying particular attention to the organisation of teaching and learning in the classroom and to the underlying value base of partnership. Finally, it considers the areas for future development of partnership work in social work education.

Our aim is to present key messages and materials in an accessible way that will be of use to educators and all participants in the educational process. The materials presented in this guide have been identified from a number of sources. These include research findings from a systematic review of the literature and the views of stakeholders gained during interviews and focus groups that explored their experience of the teaching and learning of partnership in qualifying training.

Practice learning was an important aspect of enquiry during the review, but we learnt more about aspirations in relation to good partnership working than details of learning in and from practice. However, in discussing the experience of partnership in practice learning we identified some of the key concerns, which enable us to put forward some suggestions for the future development of partnership learning in practice.

Key messages of this guide

1. There is confusion about the meaning of 'partnership', causing wide variation in approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
2. The concept of partnership work is simultaneously contested and taken for granted.
3. In teaching partnership, programmes draw on a range of related material, including organisation and empowerment theory.
4. Partnership networks in social work education are complex and multi-layered. They include relationships between educators, practitioners, people who use services and their carers, students and a range of other professionals.
5. The emphasis on user involvement in the social work degree means that this aspect of partnership has received particular attention since 2002. However, many aspects of partnership working with users and carers remain undeveloped.
6. The evidence about the teaching of interprofessional partnership work mostly involves examples of partnerships with health-related professions.
7. Knowledge review 10 identified two main approaches to the design of a college-based curriculum for partnership work: the embedded approach and the discrete approach.
8. The review found no evidence of a coherent and explicit 'partnership curriculum' in practice learning.
9. Education for partnership work shares some similarities with education for anti-oppressive practice: it is about managing power, requires constant attention and is vulnerable to charges of political correctness.
10. The timing of the delivery of interprofessional partnership learning is contested, linked to concerns about the establishment and consolidation of professional identity and confidence.
11. There is a consensus that user and carer involvement should begin as early as possible in both programme planning and delivery.
12. The complexities of partnerships with involuntary users are rarely explicitly addressed.

13. Students are clear that they have benefited from learning from users and carers. This may improve their skills in listening, showing empathy and respect, and recognising the strengths and wisdom that users and carers bring.
14. Users and carers involved in contributing to social work education talk about gaining an increase in confidence and self-esteem. In some cases they gain financial reward and, in a few programmes, they receive academic credit.

Key messages and good practice: Introduction

This section takes up in turn each of the key questions identified by [Knowledge review 10](#) for social work educators to address.

For each it first summarises the findings from both parts of [Knowledge review 10](#), the research review and the practice survey, highlighting what is known and not yet known about education for partnership work and detailing the core elements for a distinctive, relevant and comprehensive partnership work curriculum. It is informed by contributions from academics and researchers, practitioners, students, and people who use services and their carers.

This information summary for each question is then followed by examples of good practice of the learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work, with the objective of providing models that practitioners might draw on as a whole or part.

The selected examples were identified either in the knowledge review, or in the course of follow-up work in preparation for this resource guide. We intended to draw on case examples from England, Wales and Northern Ireland because these areas are covered by SCIE. However, the research team was unable to arrange fieldwork visits in Northern Ireland within the agreed timeframe, possibly as a consequence of widespread research fatigue in social work departments. This means that the case examples are drawn primarily from England and Wales. In addition we have drawn examples which have come to our attention in Scotland, the site of some innovative practice in social work education, supported by the [Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services \(IRISS\)](#).

What do we mean by 'partnership work'?

Although an understanding of partnership is taken for granted there is little theoretical clarity about the concept. Educators have to enable students to understand the issue with little help from core research literature or textbooks. The danger is that this lack of clarity will lead to an uncritical approach to partnership learning both in the classroom and in practice.

Key information from the knowledge review

The research review examined partnership work as this referred to studies of education for partnership work with people who use services and their carers, students and agency colleagues, and included interprofessional education where there was a clear focus on partnership work. Essential as it was to differentiate in this way, it was only the beginning.

There is a pervasive conceptual confusion about the meaning of 'partnership', and the wide range of terms used causes considerable variation in approaches to the learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work. Furthermore, although it is regarded as self-evident that partnership will be central to learning, partnership work is more often implicit than explicit and simultaneously contested and taken for granted.

Different terms for partnership

- shared learning
- cooperation
- collaboration
- teamwork
- joint education/practice
- interdisciplinary partnership working
- multi-disciplinary working
- participation

A single, unambiguous definition of partnership work did not emerge from the research review. Most respondents (students, tutors, practice teachers, users and carers) had difficulties defining partnership. In the practice survey, both college and practice-based staff identified partnership as:

- an umbrella term embracing different relationships, complex and under-theorised and therefore not recognised.

Terms commonly used to characterise partnership referred to sharing power, joint decision-making and recognition of respective roles and responsibilities. The conclusions argue strongly for greater transparency in the concept of partnership, acknowledging that it has different meanings in different contexts.

A working definition of partnership

The following definition is offered as a benchmark and starting point for discussion, to illuminate what it omits as well as what it includes:

The essence of partnership is sharing. It is marked by respect for one another, role divisions, rights to information, accountability, competence, and value accorded to individual input. In short, each partner is seen as having something to contribute, power is shared, decisions are made jointly and roles are not only respected but are also backed by legal and moral rights. (3) (citing Jo Tunnard, 1991)

This definition may be misleading in that it implies shared power and 'jointness', which may not be the experience of all stakeholders. There needs to be an acknowledgement of differences in power. The advantage of this definition, however, is that it could apply to partnership with a range of stakeholders, including users as well as other professionals.

Levels of the learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work

Confusion about the meaning of 'partnership' has caused wide variation in approaches to the learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work. This requires us to be particularly clear about the use of terms here.

Taking into account the ambiguous nature of 'partnership work', the use of other terms to define partnership and the need to differentiate the practice survey from interprofessional education, the research team identified the following possible levels of partnership work:

- social work student and user/carer
- student and educator/assessor
- educator/assessor and stakeholder, including users/carers, employers and practitioners
- higher-education institution and stakeholder
- social work student and student from another profession
- social work students with others on same programme
- social work educators and academics from other disciplines.

We will be exploring examples of good practice that address one or more of these levels.

Defining and recognising good practice

Good practice is a notoriously difficult concept to define. Ideally, evidence to demonstrate that practice is 'good' would be research-based, but there are at least two related problems with adopting this approach.

- As found in the research review, we lack a sufficient research base about the learning, teaching and assessment of partnership work, in particular evidence about outcomes for student learning and the consequent outcomes for users and carers.
- The practice survey revealed some interesting and potentially significant practice, not yet adequately researched and arguably not ready for dissemination but which if not included would prevent wider dissemination that might in itself result in increased research activity.

This problem was very usefully discussed by the research team, including the project's stakeholder group, whose members comprised undergraduate and postgraduate social work students, users and carers, practitioners and employers. As a result, the research team identified the following good practice criteria and agreed that to determine good practice, criteria 1–4 must be met, and criteria 5–7 are desirable.

Criteria for selecting good practice examples

- User and carer involvement in programme design or delivery
- Teaching, learning and assessment of partnership work specifically identified
- Innovative features in the design or delivery of teaching, learning and assessment of partnership work
- Partnership work and the new degree disseminated in the public domain, for example, through refereed conference presentations or journal articles
- Consideration of partnership with other professionals
- Consideration of the 'pay off' for users and carers
- Evidence of research or evaluation of partnership practice.

Why are criteria 5, 6 and 7 desirable rather than essential?

Criterion 5: Interprofessional education had been included in the research review only if it focused explicitly on partnership work.

Criterion 6: The notion of 'pay off' for users and carers emerged during the practice survey as an important issue. However, beyond payment to users and carers, generally accepted as a norm for practice in social work education, thinking about other kinds of rewards, such as accreditation of training for users and carers, was at an early stage.

Criterion 7: By designating 'evidence of research or evaluation of partnership practice' as a desirable and not essential criterion, we risked downgrading the value of research. However, as indicated above, the practice survey revealed some interesting and potentially significant practice that if disseminated more widely might in itself result in increased research activity.

Why teach partnership work?

Partnership work is a necessity in practice, driven by policy, legislation and guidance. Despite its high profile at this level, it receives no specific mention in the National Occupational Standards for social work. However, there is consensus among educators that partnership is a core element of the curriculum. The main questions appear to relate to the extent to which students are able to identify partnership learning from university and practice learning in order to apply this to practice.

Key information from the knowledge review

Three key reasons emerge for teaching partnership work, although the rationale for doing so is rarely explicitly stated in programme documentation.

1. Philosophical commitment

There is a strong commitment to partnership work in social work education, grounded in a philosophy and value base at the core of practice. Partnerships required for the Diploma in Social Work,⁽⁴⁾ the previous social work qualification, reinforced this view. The involvement of people who use services and their carers has gradually emerged since the 1980s, supported by social changes such as a greater emphasis on rights and an awareness of social exclusion.⁽⁵⁾ Some educators in the research review made specific links between partnership and anti-oppressive practice. They did this in three specific ways:

- partnership is an essential aspect of anti-oppressive practice
- partnership, like anti-oppressive practice, is a process that needs constant attention
- partnership, like anti-oppressive practice, is a concept that is talked about but is not always delivered.

2. Government policy

Governmental policy in relation to public sector services firmly endorses the importance of partnership work within and between services, and with users and carers. In the early years of New Labour the focus was on interprofessional partnership practice with health professions. Since the Children Act (2004) the emphasis appears to be shifting to children's services, with an accompanying shift in the discourse from 'partnership' to 'integration'. Practitioners commented on some of these issues in a focus group. They identified partnership as essential because of the nature of organisations. One commented:

Collaborative working is required by government. Integrated teams require interdisciplinary working, interdisciplinary teams need partnership.

3. Regulatory requirement

The UK regulatory context for partnership work in the social work degrees introduced in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland between 2003 and 2005 refers to partnership work in different ways.

UK regulatory context for partnership work: United Kingdom

Code of Practice for Social Care Workers (2002) - 'Working and respecting the roles and expertise of workers from other agencies and working in partnership with them.' (6:7) Collaboration with people who use services and their carers is implied.

Quality Assurance Authority Benchmark Statement for Social Work (1999) (currently under review) - Partnership is implied in requirements for interdisciplinary professional collaboration and engagement with users, carers and other stakeholders. It is referred to specifically in the context of effective interagency collaboration.

National Occupational Standards for social work (2002) - Partnership is implied in collaborative working with individuals, families, carers, groups and communities, in working to develop and maintain effective working relationships and working within multi-disciplinary and multi-organisational teams.

UK regulatory context for partnership work: England

Department of Health Requirements for Social Work Training (2002) - 'All social workers will learn and be assessed on partnership working' (p. 16).

UK regulatory context for partnership work: Wales

Raising Standards. The Qualification Framework for the Degree in Social Work in Wales (2003) Appendix: All Wales Framework for Assessment in a Social Work Degree - Based on the National Occupational Standards and the Quality Assurance Authority benchmarking statement, the framework refers to partnership in terms of the development and demonstration of skills and knowledge. For example: Levels 1 and 2 students are required to demonstrate knowledge of inter-relationships between social services and other agencies.

UK regulatory context for partnership work: Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Framework Specification (2003) - The National Occupational Standards are adapted to respond to the Northern Ireland context. Partnership is mentioned in relation to requirements during the degree and at the point of qualification. For example: knowledge of interprofessional working, working in partnership with colleagues and provider organisations and reviewing in partnership with people who use services.

UK regulatory context for partnership work: Scotland

The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland Standards in Social Work Education (2003, revised 2006) - Partnership is specifically mentioned throughout the

framework in terms of underpinning knowledge, transferable skills and competence. For example: working in partnership with people who use services, carers, partner organisations and colleagues in other organisations. Students must understand factors leading to effective interprofessional working. The whole of Standard 6 involves working in partnership, to help individuals achieve and maintain greater independence.

The UK regulatory context for partnership work

As the regulatory requirements suggest, the overall impression from these frameworks is that partnership is more often implied than specifically identified as a requirement for good practice. The exceptions to this are the Scottish Standards, which refer specifically to partnership working throughout their requirements. For example:

- Work in partnership with individuals, families, carers, groups and communities, so they can:
 - identify, clarify and express their expectations, strengths and limitations;
 - assess and make informed decisions about their circumstances, resources and preferred options. (Standard 1)
- Work in partnership with individuals, families, carers, groups, communities and others to develop and maintain support networks. (Standard 2)
- Develop effective helping relationships and partnerships with other individuals, groups and organisations that bring about change and achieve planned outcomes. (Standard 2)
- The learning focus of Standard 6 involves working in partnership, with and on behalf of individuals, families, carers, groups and communities, to help them achieve and maintain greater independence.

Although the National Occupational Standards (2002) do not make explicit reference to 'partnership' it is hard to imagine meeting the required competencies without an awareness of the qualities of partnership already explored. For example, effective partnership working is a key factor when meeting the following competencies:

- work with colleagues in team development (21:3)
- developing and maintaining effective working relationships (17:1)
- working with individuals, families, carers, groups and communities in assessment, planning and evaluation (2:3, 2:4)
- evaluating the effectiveness of the team, network or system (17:3).

Similarly the General Social Care Council Code of Practice for Social Care Workers (2002) requires social workers to maintain professional standards by:

- working openly and cooperatively with colleagues and treating them with respect (6.5)
- recognising and respecting the roles and expertise of workers from other agencies and working in partnership with them (6.7)

- ensuring that relevant colleagues and agencies are informed about the outcomes and implications of risk assessments (4.4)
- respecting and, where appropriate, promoting the individual views and wishes of both users and carers (1.2).

Whether explicitly and implicitly these frameworks require partnership working to be at the heart of social work practice.

Why teach partnership work? Good practice

Modelling partnership work

While it is not a requirement, there is a strong consensus that working in partnership is core to teaching and learning good practice. It is also a necessary part of involving people who use services and their carers and integrating theory and practice into social work education. It also reflects social work values and for some programmes this means modelling partnership throughout the programme.

If the degree is not delivered in partnership then we are not providing a model of partnership for students. It is not just what you teach but how you teach it. (BA Social Work Programme Director)

There is a prevailing norm that students will learn about partnership work by observing and experiencing it in action. Given the strong values base in social work, this argument extends to suggesting that partnership work should be integrated into the whole system so that in effect it would be evidenced throughout all seven levels identified in [What do we mean by 'partnership work'?](#)

Good practice example: University of Plymouth - BSc Hons Health and Social Care Management

The consultative group of users, carers, academics and practitioners meets regularly. It has been involved in planning the new award and continues to play a significant role in all aspects of delivery and development. In addition to involvement in assessment, it contributes to partnership learning in a number of ways.

- People who use services and their carers are involved in the substantial two-week induction at the beginning of the course, which includes a session explaining why users are involved. This emphasis on the contribution of users defines the culture of the whole course.
- People who use services take part in teaching sessions. While there has been positive feedback from students, this involvement takes a lot of time, both during the session and in preparation.
- At the selection stage: users are involved as observers in the group interview and also play an equal part in individual interviews.

Good practice example: University of Dundee - Service User and Carer (CU) Group, BA Hons Social Work

The Service User and Carer (CU) Group has been involved from the outset in strategic design, development, planning, delivery and ongoing review of the degree programme. (5)

The CU Group is linked to a flexible, grassroots network of 40 local user and carer groups which meet monthly to consider strategies for users to influence the programme. The members of the group have formal representation within programme structures through their representatives on the programme committee.

Ager et al identify the values involved in ensuring that users are not only consulted but can also see the impact of their involvement throughout the programme:

- no tokenism; users to share genuine power
- all groups to have a voice, especially hard-to-reach individuals and groups
- fair funding for involvement
- plain English to be used
- bottom-up networking, beginning with groups who have experience of social work
- the group should see change as a result of the consultation process.

The group influences the design and delivery of course materials through discussion with lecturers, who must visit at least two groups to prepare the year's teaching. Ideas from these meetings are logged on a file so they are available to all lecturers.

The initiative is too young yet to have been evaluated, but the authors believe it embodies for students and carers the ethos of partnership not just in content, but modelled and made real in processes embedded throughout the programme.

Mainstreaming partnership work

A very clear position was taken by the Director of the BA (Hons) Social Work at the University of Wales Institute at Cardiff, where the aim is to 'mainstream' partnership and collaborative learning throughout the programme. Furthermore, this programme is distinctive because documentation clearly outlines the prevailing philosophy. Perhaps surprisingly, the practice survey revealed that, in general, programme documentation lacks strong values and philosophical position and tends to focus instead on administrative detail.

Good practice example: University of Wales Institute at Cardiff (UWIC) - BA (Hons) Social Work Programme

The aims of the 'programme philosophy' are defined as:

through partnership and collaborative learning the Programme aims to integrate college and practice-based learning ... principles of integration and collaboration, accessibility and flexibility are mainstreamed throughout the Programme in terms of management and organisation, selection and admission, structure and delivery, teaching, learning and assessment.

The 12 educational aims of the programme include:

- To build on and enhance the concept of partnership between agencies, the colleges and users of social services.

The Programme Partnership includes:

- Thirteen statutory and two voluntary sector agencies
- Two user and carer groups
- Two higher education institutions, including a further education college.

Representatives of this form the programme management committee. Sub-committees such as the equal opportunities committee and the allocation, selection and access sub-committee also include partner representatives. The Programme Director was clear about the importance of regularly auditing processes to ensure that integrated themes do not get lost or become something else over time. (BA Hons Social Work Programme Handbook 2004/05–2006/07, p 5.)

In this example, partnership is seen as one of the means by which some of the key aims of the course can be delivered. These are:

- the integration of university- and practice-based learning
- collaborative learning
- accessibility and flexibility in the management, structure and delivery of the programme.

The UWIC programme is unusual because the programme philosophy emerges clearly from the course handbook and other documentation. While most courses similarly involve partnerships in areas such as course management and admissions, and educators frequently talk about partnership, this is the only example we found where partnership is so clearly written into the course culture.

What does teaching about partnership work include?

Given the theoretical confusion already identified, the teaching content in relation to partnership is diverse, depending on the teaching aims and theoretical approach adopted. There has to be a 'fit' between the learning aims and the content, reflecting a balance between learning about knowledge, skills and values.

Key information from the knowledge review

There are similarities and differences in the content of learning and teaching for partnership with people who use services and their carers, and learning and teaching partnership with other professionals. This suggests that the context for the learning and teaching of partnership work is significant to the content.

The main commonality appears to be in the values base for partnership work and the view that, similar to education for anti-oppressive practice, education for partnership work is about identifying and managing power. However, an analysis of power is largely missing in the partnership education literature.

Partnership knowledge and skills: between professionals

In the research review the distinction was made between partnership education which is interprofessional (delivered interprofessionally) and knowledge and skill development for interprofessional working (which may be delivered unprofessionally). The following table provides a summary of some of the information gained about knowledge and skill development which emerged from both approaches to partnership education.

Knowledge and skills in partnership work between professionals	
Students are expected to know about and understand:	Students are expected to develop skills in:
professional identities, perspectives and value bases	collaboration
groupwork and teamwork	communication
role distinctions, boundaries, complementarity, conflict.	advocacy
	managing multi-disciplinary meetings.

The literature of interprofessional partnership education provides a very mixed picture of its effects. Some of the key points that emerged from different studies are summarised below:

- Studies measuring changes are able to demonstrate improved knowledge and attitudes, though in one study improved attitudes were to issues relating to domestic violence, and attitudes towards interdisciplinary work made no improvement. (6)

- A study of palliative care training noted an increase in perceived understanding of professional roles was maintained at the three-month follow-up and was significantly greater than in the control group. However, this was in measurements of 'perceived knowledge', not 'actual practice'. (7)
- Two other studies report qualified attitude change related to interprofessional learning. In a study of medical and social work students, the authors concluded that attitudes can be changed through shared learning but this cannot remove all the barriers, some of which are structural. In this study, for just under one-fifth of the sample, the programme was aversive and attitudes worsened. (8)
- One study identified 13 skills in partnership work, and social workers ranked the importance of each skill identified. It was significant that they rated their prior training as ineffective in enabling them to develop these skills. Social workers felt particularly ill-equipped to handle conflict, adapt to change in other organisations, or run multi-disciplinary meetings. (9) We would suggest furthermore that it is debatable whether these are partnership skills or social work skills used in a context of partnership work? Is there, or should there be, a difference?

Partnership knowledge and skills: users and carers

Partnership with users and carers in a range of fields is discussed in the literature, including domestic violence, palliative care, families and child protection, mental health, learning disabilities and older people. We did not find residential care discussed in relation to social work and partnership work.

Jackson and Morris (3) reported that coverage of the implications of race, class, religion, culture and language was seen as important in developing partnership practice, although students felt that programmes could only cover certain aspects in the time available. Race and language were covered in all programmes they reviewed, but disability, sexuality, class, religion and culture had limited coverage. These findings might well be different if this study were repeated now. However, we would agree with the authors that without explicit teaching in this area, an understanding of how oppression can create barriers to partnership working is unlikely to be grasped.

The following table identifies the expectations of knowledge and skills of partnership work with users and carers which emerged from the literature.

Knowledge and skills in partnership work with users and carers	
Students are expected to know about and understand:	Students are expected to develop skills in:
user and carer experiences in a range of fields discriminatory and oppressive stereotypes and attitudes and their effects.	interpersonal communication, including with users and carers with particular communication needs (see, for example, SCIE Knowledge review 12 (10) advocacy working in an empowering way demonstrating respect using written agreements critically reflecting on explicit and/or implicit feedback.

The limited nature of these lists, particularly of knowledge, reflects the findings from the literature at the time of the review. Good practice examples given below provide a more comprehensive overview of the potential knowledge and skills required for partnership work with users and carers.

What does teaching about partnership work include? Good practice

This is not a comprehensive account of what is available but is designed to provide a flavour of the content of teaching, drawing on approaches adopted by educators included in the research review. It tends to emphasise the work done in the ‘discrete’ models (see [How is partnership work taught?](#)), because this is where the partnership content is more accessible. What is evident is that there is a range of learning frameworks or ‘hooks’ that provide the structure for partnership learning.

Using community care frameworks to teach partnership

In the following example, community care, and particularly assessment, provides the framework for a uniprofessional module which places power relations at the core of learning. Although the main emphasis is on partnership with people who use services and their carers, practitioners also make contributions, bringing their expertise to specific sessions.

Good practice example: University of Nottingham - MA/ Diploma in Social Work, Module L3D761: Users' and carers' perspectives in community care

This module is designed and assessed by people who have all had contact with social work services as users or as carers. There is a recognition that while community care legislation stresses the use of needs-led assessments, there is a history of and tendency for social workers to make decisions on behalf of people who use services.

The aims of the module include enabling students to understand the unique experiences and contributions of users while recognising that successful social work practice stems from an awareness of what stakeholders have in common. In preparation for practice with adults, the module explores a range of community care issues including care management, experiences of oppression and adult abuse and protection.

The module is delivered by a range of contributors, including people using services, educators and practitioners who bring different expertise to understanding community care. It attempts to redress the power imbalance between social workers and users/carers. It does this by looking at the impact of social workers on people's lives and is directly informed by personal experience, ultimately proposing the rethinking of the nature of the relationship between social worker and user and carer.

Learning partnership through community profiling

The University of Bath has developed a module which integrates learning in the classroom with a practice placement. This takes place at an early stage in the course, and the framework for modelling and teaching partnership is the completion of a community needs assessment. The main learning partnerships are with people who use services and their carers and the agencies with which they are involved.

Good practice example: University of Bath - BSc Social Work and Applied Social Sciences

A community project combines college teaching with practice learning. The main outcome of the teaching and learning is completion of a community needs assessment.

The aims and objectives of the module are to:

- introduce students to information gathering and its contribution to service delivery
- learn about different sources of information gathering and how to interpret information
- develop a community profile as a means of listening to the voice of marginalised people and incorporate that voice into an assessment of their collective need
- apply these skills to the practice curriculum and on placement.

University-based teaching includes learning how to gather information and then how to interpret and present it. Although these sources of learning are important, the main learning takes place in the community when students engage in research in partnership with people who are current or potential users. Students undertake projects throughout the semester in small groups. These are provided with ongoing tutorial support. Each group presents a project during a session at the end of the semester. The aim is to present material in a coherent form which is useful information for the agencies who commissioned each project. The advantage for the agency is that they will have additional material to help improve services.

Learning partnership by exploring partnership and interprofessional practice

There are examples of modules which explore partnership working adopting a uniprofessional approach. While social work students are not taught alongside other professions, practitioners from other professions are involved in teaching sessions. People using services are also involved in the preparation and delivery of the teaching sessions.

In response to the shortage of texts which are directly relevant to partnership and social work, a range of theoretical material is used, including communication, group and organisation theory.

Good practice example: University of Sussex and University of Brighton - BA Hons Social Work, Partnership and Interprofessional Practice, Level 1

Module aims: Social work depends on partnership and collaboration with other professions. The central aim of this module is to study the theory and practice of such partnership and collaboration. It is studied both in terms of the detail of the critical issues, good practice and the broader social and political context within which collaboration is sought. Issues of power and inequality in regard to race, class, disability and gender among others will be addressed throughout the module. People who use services and practitioners will also make a contribution to teaching.

Learning methods: Students are expected to be active learners and to work together during the module, learning about partnership and collaboration by reflecting on their own processes. The aim is that learning together will itself be helpful preparation for collaborative work in practice. A problem-based approach to learning will be used. Over the term, students will build their learning around a core case study about partnership and interprofessional practice in mental health.

Weekly pattern: Each day will begin with a whole group lecture. While this session is based around a lecture format, discussions and various exercises will also play a part. The second part of the morning and afternoon sessions will involve work in study groups. The morning study group will be held with a facilitator; the afternoon group will be student-led. Staff facilitators will enable the group to focus on learning from the module content but also from group process.

Learning interprofessionally

This example is an interprofessional module (social work and learning disability nursing) with a focus on partnership and participation.

Good practice example: London South Bank University - Module: Partnership and participation, BA Level 2 Social Work and BSc Level 2 Nursing and Social Work Studies

This ten-week unit examines the core value of partnership within a context of health and social care practice. The unit explores the full range of partnership issues and contexts, looking at user involvement, working with parents, working with families and carers and working in a community context.

Interprofessional and inter-organisational issues and practices are also investigated. In this way students are helped to identify and address issues associated with difference and to incorporate these understandings into their strategic thinking around boundaries and boundary crossings. The unit introduces students to some key issues and dilemmas and enables them to draw on a range of perspectives associated with partnership practice with a particular focus on networking theories and methods.

How is partnership work taught?

One of the most important issues for those planning social work education is the question of where and how partnership work sits, both within the curriculum and within programme structures and processes. Is partnership learning more effectively delivered in a discrete module or should it be integrated throughout the curriculum? The 'separation' or 'integration' arguments also apply to other aspects of curriculum development. There are also issues about how partnership teaching should be delivered and what constitute the most effective teaching materials to support learning.

Key information from the knowledge review

By far the majority of teaching initiatives concern discrete courses or practice-learning projects, many of them demonstrating the 'creative and inclusive methods of promoting partnership' called for by Levin (11) on behalf of SCIE. From these, there runs a continuum from more comprehensive partnership-oriented development to (more rarely) wholesale integration of partnership throughout the curriculum. The knowledge review characterised the two ends of this continuum as the embedded and discrete approaches.

The embedded approach

The case for fundamental integration of partnership working into the structures and processes of social work education has some strong advocates. In this approach there is no separately identified 'partnership' module during the course:

we are addressing together how partnership work is taught and by whom, rather than try and deal with them as separate entities.' (educator interviewed in the practice survey)

The advocates of this approach feel that it enables partnership to be central to all the teaching rather than a 'bolt on'. The main question for educators in adopting this approach is whether teaching that is embedded and frequently implicit enables students to identify and apply the learning in both college and practice. Within this approach the main risk is that 'It must have been integrated because we didn't notice it'. (3)

The embedded approach also emphasises the importance of modelling good partnership practice throughout the programme. Examples include partnerships between students, practice assessors and educators in the negotiation of practice learning contracts, ensuring that students' views are heard and that people who use services are valued in the contributions they make.

The discrete approach

An alternative approach to teaching partnership is the discrete model, in which a specific 'partnership module' is delivered. The aims and content of these modules is diverse, ranging from those with a focus on skills and values to others where the emphasis is on organisational structures and interprofessional working. For example, the practice survey identified modules called Learning Partnership through Community

Profiling, Partnership Learning and Management and a Partnership and Participation module, which explored partnerships in health and social care. The wide and varied content is inevitable given the conceptual confusion about partnership. However, this diversity also reflects the significance of the concept in a range of social work arenas.

The advantage of adopting the discrete approach is that partnership is identified as a key concept, significant enough to warrant a specific module. However, this may not answer the charge of tokenism if partnership is not explicitly identified in and linked to teaching at all points in the course.

Apart from these differences to the organisation of teaching, both models share similar approaches to partnership in respect of other aspects of programme design and delivery. This includes reflecting social work values and good partnership relations in the management of the programme. Scheyett and Diehl (12) summarise these characteristics:

... [in] a true partnership between clients and social workers in social work education ... Clients would have significant roles throughout the educational process, working together with educators in establishing goals for social work education, creating strategies to meet these goals, and implementing and evaluating these educational strategies in formal academic settings. (p 436)

Although their views relate to user partnerships they are equally relevant to the goals of other stakeholder partnerships.

A summary of the two main approaches	
Embedded	Discrete
Partnership work is integrated into aspects of the classroom or practice curriculum, but is not necessarily explicitly identified.	Specific modules focus on aspects of partnership work. Examples include modules that take an organisational or a values and anti-oppressive practice perspective, or those which look at work with particular user and carer groups.
Students may learn partnership work by seeing others doing it and/or doing it themselves. The modelling of partnership within the course culture is a source of learning about good partnership practice.	Specific learning activities are designed to inform and develop student understanding of the experiences and views of users and carers, confound stereotypes, learn skills in communication and inclusive behaviour and question their own roles and status.
Practice learning is an important resource for modelling partnership work e.g. in collaborative relationships between	There remain questions about whether the learning about partnership in specific modules can be transferred to practice.

students, educators and agency colleagues.	
Partnership with users and carers may be integrated into parts of the overall organisation of programmes, or into specific activities such as selection.	Partnership with users and carers may be integrated into parts of the overall organisation of programmes, or into specific activities such as selection.
Interprofessional and uniprofessional partnership education is very unlikely to be implicitly integrated into the organisation of a programme. There are examples of other professionals making contributions to teaching and assessment.	Interprofessional and uniprofessional partnership education may be designed into parts of the organisation of a programme, but partnership is rarely identified as the main purpose of the learning.

Embedded: modelling partnership in staff–user and staff–carer relationship

The practice survey identified programmes that aimed to integrate partnership with users and carers across their structures (see [Good Practice examples](#)). Several authors (for example Levin (11)) have been careful to draw attention to key practicalities and points of principle in managing the process of user and carer participation in social work education. Among these are:

- fair and realistic remuneration for participants
- physical access
- the need for careful planning, preparation and support of trainers
- vocational course accreditation
- attention to relational issues and power imbalances
- agreements about confidentiality
- dangers of atypical representation and of labelling participants according to their user or carer status while sidelining their identity
- avoiding the pitfalls of tokenism, and ‘consultationitis’, whereby they are invited to participate too late, too minimally to make an impact, or else not for long enough to see results.

Embedded: modelling partnership in the student–educator relationship

If social work education about partnership work is to have meaning and integrity, it must accord with the reality of students’ lived experience. Two reports of specific initiatives to model a partnership-based approach in the educator–student relationships are both to be found in the USA. Huff and Johnson (13) describe postgraduate social work students who worked in partnership with teachers and with each other, using learning contracts to define the scope and goals of their work and, to an extent, determine the nature and weight of their assessment. Bordelon (14) describes how the participatory learning approach adopted in a community-based project engaged him as educator/facilitator

with his students in a shared and, according to his account, mutually beneficial learning experience.

Discrete: interprofessional partnership work

The how and by whom of interprofessional education are addressed in depth in the sister publication by [SCIE: Interprofessional education for qualifying social work](#). (2) It is worth noting here in relation to interprofessional partnership education and comparing the benefits of interprofessional and uniprofessional education, that Glen¹⁵ argues strongly that lack of clarity about the priorities of interprofessional education will lead to resentment and a perception that uniprofessional learning opportunities are being diluted. This was indeed reported by two studies of an interprofessional programme. (16,17) By far the strongest message from several of these studies is the difficulty of fitting it all in.

Discrete: Learning from users or 'experts by experience'

The term 'experts by experience' is one adopted in [SCIE Resource Guide 8: Teaching, learning and assessment of law in social work education](#). (18) In considering how that experience is used in learning and teaching, three different approaches are emerging to using experience in the classroom.

- Co-trainers with academic staff, bearing the testimony of their own experience - Users and carers may be based in organisations that provide training and support to undertake the co-trainer role in the university, and/or training and support may be provided by the university itself. There now are many examples of users and carers working as co-trainers from a range of services, including mental health, learning disability, older people, care leavers, young people and children.
- Unstructured conversations between students and users or carers - Experience may be integrated into planned but unstructured 'conversations' with students, discussing topics such as 'what a good social worker should be like'.
- Structured dialogue between students and users or carers - Experience may be integrated in a planned and 'structured dialogue' where people who use services and their carers are guided by facilitators through structured encounters with students in the classroom. Staff facilitators take responsibility for introducing themes for discussion, ensuring that the conversation flows, and that all participants have a voice.

Learning and teaching partnership work in practice placements

Placements are assumed by some to offer the best opportunity to learn about partnership in practice. The process of negotiation between practice teacher, tutor and student in setting up placements itself provides a basis for partnership learning that could be better recognised and developed. (3) Paradoxically, however, there is also a view that partnership work is not commonly found in practice, particularly in the statutory sector. The mosaic of regulatory requirements for partnership work (see [Regulatory Context](#)) does not enhance this situation, particularly in England where the National

Occupational Standards for Social Work are not explicit about 'partnership' requirements in practice.

To date, the planned opportunities for learning interprofessional partnership practice have predominantly been in health or health-related settings. The more recent governmental focus on integrated children's services seems likely to shift the interprofessional partnership practice agenda to include a range of services such as education and youth and community work. As already noted, the discourse has also shifted from 'partnership' to integration'.

There are accounts, primarily in the USA, of interesting community-based practice learning initiatives. The focus here is on student learning, in collaboration with community groups and outside the framework of agency settings, about users' and carers' lives and lifestyles and their service needs. Students are encouraged to work with and learn from users as community members and as resources, rather than as victims.

How is partnership work taught? Good practice

Most professional programmes adopt a range of approaches to teaching and require students to be active participants, taking responsibility for their own learning. These characteristics of adult learning are particularly evident in teaching about partnership where students address experiences of partnership work in the classroom.

Teaching and learning can take different forms, reflecting the broad scope of the concept and the diversity of learning aims and objectives. Approaches include:

- Direct teaching about partnership - Teaching is usually interactive with an emphasis on groupwork. Students learn about key concepts and skills such as communication, roles and boundaries. Frequently, case scenarios are used to simulate situations encountered in practice. There are examples of the use of e-learning to develop virtual environments where a range of partnership learning can be encountered. Providing opportunities to 'practice' learning about partnership in the classroom.
- Partnership learning modelled in the teaching of partnership - Examples of this approach include the use of groupwork to reflect the experience of team working. Conferences can be set up in the classroom with students playing different roles related to a case example. In both these approaches students are encouraged to learn from the strengths and weaknesses of 'partnership in action'. Students and users tell their stories and reflect on their experiences as a means of rebalancing the usual power relations.
- Partnership modelled in the delivery of every aspect of the programme - In this approach the culture of the programme is developed to reflect collaboration with all stakeholders.

These approaches are not distinctly segregated and in practice they overlap, as the good practice examples here illustrate.

Learning in and from groups

Good practice example: London South Bank University - Module: Partnership and participation, BA Level 2 Social Work and BSc Level 2 Nursing and Social Work Studies

The partnership and participation module includes 80 nursing and social work students. The module is taught jointly by a nurse and a social worker with involvement from people who use services, carers and practitioners. Although there is some teaching delivered to the total group, much of the work is done in eight or nine small, interprofessional groups. The students work on a group task which explores a range of dilemmas generated by a case scenario. At the end of the module the students take part in a group presentation which makes up 40 per cent of the module assessment. Although the groups are unfacilitated, the students are introduced to groupwork theory in sessions that take place before the groups begin.

Before the module takes place the students identify themselves as different sets of professionals. The main aim is to introduce them to some key partnership concepts such as collaboration, boundaries, communication and roles. Students learn about these issues from the taught input and their experience of practice, but they also learn experientially from being in the groups. As the module has developed, greater emphasis is now placed on the experiential learning from the groupwork and what students learn from working in partnership in the 'here and now'.

Good practice example: University of Sussex and University of Brighton - BA Hons Social Work, Partnership and Interprofessional Practice, Level 1

This module takes place in the second term of the first year. The student group consists of 50 undergraduate social work students both full- and part-time. Before the module begins they had already been taught introductory groupwork theory and had limited experience of working in groups facilitated by staff. However, this module provides their first experience of working in unfacilitated groups, preparing a presentation and working for the whole module on an extended case scenario. The following extract from the module handbook sets out the structure and expectations of the groupwork.

The purpose of the work - The goal is to develop your knowledge and skill in partnership practice and interprofessional work. You will focus in particular on partnership and interprofessional practice in a specific scenario – the case study. You will present the results of the work you have undertaken as a group in the group presentation. The material you explore and the experience of working collaboratively will inform your individually assessed essay.

The study group tasks - Each week the presentation to the whole group will be on a topic that is relevant to the situation described in the case study. In the small study group you must then explore this topic further, discussing together questions such as these:

- Why is this topic important to the case study?
- What knowledge do you already, individually and as a group, have about this particular topic? This might include knowledge from your own experience, knowledge from reading or study, and knowledge from 'doing' in employment.
- What do you need to find out in order to understand more on this topic and its relevance to the case study?
- What theoretical perspectives would help you understand the topic?
- What research evidence would it be useful to search for?
- What skills relating to this topic might be important in practice?
- How are you going to find out?
- What sources might be useful?
- Who in the group will do what and how will you feed back to each other?

Working together - Working on this material, and planning for the group presentation at the end, will involve negotiation and collaboration between everyone in the group. Remember that if you work together your individual resources can be multiplied by the number of the people in the group, but you will only get the benefit of this if you work constructively together. It is important to create an environment in which, by working collaboratively, you achieve more than you would individually, and in which you can explore the dynamics of working towards cooperation. Finally, in the first session, you will need to consider the topic of the first lecture on Professionalism, Power and Partnership, and decide what work you need to do on this in the week ahead.

- What do you need to know in order to consider professionalism in relation to the case study?
- Who might read what?
- Who might talk to whom?
- Who might search which websites?

Case scenarios

In both these examples of using groupwork, the learning was focused on a case scenario.

Case scenario example 1: London South Bank University - Module: Partnership and participation, BA Level 2 Social Work and BSc Level 2 Nursing and Social Work Studies

Elliot Grant is a 10-year-old child of dual heritage, his mother is Scottish and his father is African Caribbean. Elliot's parents separated when he was five and he and his sister Kelly lived with their mother Kay until she became involved in a new relationship with Andy Brown, who is White British. Mr Brown appeared to take an active dislike to Elliot, who increasingly became the family 'scapegoat', being blamed for everything that went wrong. He was constantly reminded by his mother and stepfather that he was 'just like

your father, useless and not to be trusted'. Elliot was regularly beaten and physically disciplined by his step-dad. He became increasingly wary of his mother and sister and was clearly distressed in school and not achieving educationally. Following an investigation prompted by school staff reporting bruising and concerns about Elliot's emotional and physical state, his name was placed on the Child Protection Register.

Despite attempts to work with the family and effect change, serious concerns continued about Elliot's welfare and reported incidents of physical abuse and neglect. Eventually social services successfully applied for a care order and Elliot was placed with foster carers. He continued to have supervised contact with his mother and sibling, and attempts were being made to renew contact with his father, who had moved away from the area. Elliot was allocated to Jane, a social worker on the looked-after children's team in social services.

Although initially settling well in the foster home, Elliott becomes more and more withdrawn and refuses physical contact. His overeating leads to rapid weight gain and he experiences difficulties at school, both socially with his peer group and educationally. The special educational needs coordinator at the school is very concerned about Elliot's progress and seeks advice from a specialist worker from the Behaviour and Education Support Team service attached to the school and the local educational psychology team, who begin some initial screening of his behaviour and attainment. The Behaviour and Education Support Team worker and education psychologists work in close cooperation with each other.

In the foster home the carers, Sam and Belinda Watts, work hard to support Elliot and liaise with social services, school and his GP about his needs. Elliot has been recently diagnosed with some hearing loss and it is unclear how much this impacts on his development. The foster carers are also concerned about the impact of Elliot's behaviour on their own daughter, Amy, aged seven. They raise their concerns with their fostering liaison social worker, Mike, as they feel Elliot's social worker is preoccupied with his educational problems and not paying enough attention to the strain his behaviour is putting on the placement.

A statutory review meeting is held and attended by Elliot's social worker, the fostering liaison worker, and Sam and Belinda Watts. Elliot's mother is invited but does not attend; the school nurse is expected but gives her apologies. Elliot is in the review meeting but when he is told his mother is not coming he became very distressed and spends most of the meeting in tears in another room, being comforted by Belinda.

Later, telephone calls between the foster father and school identify that the school nurse is seriously concerned about Elliot's overeating and increasing weight. There are ongoing concerns about Elliot's development and educational progress. It also becomes apparent that the school nurse and special educational needs coordinator have quite negative views about the likelihood of a useful response from social services, due to a history of referrals from the school not being responded to promptly. In some cases there have been serious differences of view on how families have been dealt with by local social services.

Your task is to meet the assessment criteria (previously provided) and consider how an understanding of partnership working and selected key concepts might contribute to this scenario.

Mental health is the focus of a second case scenario example.

Case scenario example 2: University of Sussex and University of Brighton - BA Hons Social Work, Partnership and Interprofessional Practice, Level 1

Marilyn Hall is a single, 33-year-old, mixed race British woman. She was admitted to psychiatric hospital under Section 3 of the Mental Health Act (1983). She is being discharged from hospital under Section 4 of the Mental Health Act (1983) and as social worker on the Community Mental Health Team your task is to work with Marilyn and develop a plan for her discharge.

The hospital record indicates that Marilyn has a diagnosis of severe depression and a history of suicide attempts. She has had two prior compulsory admissions under the Mental Health Act (1983) over the last four years to the same psychiatric hospital. Marilyn's behaviour prior to admission had become chaotic, she had been sleeping rough and is suspected of alcohol abuse and self-harming. There is a suggestion that while in hospital, Marilyn found some comfort in talking to the hospital pastor.

Marilyn has a history of abusive relationships, most recently with an older man whom she met during a previous hospitalisation. She is frightened of him finding her again and of being attacked. She does not have children but has had several pregnancies ending in terminations. There is little information about Marilyn's family except she has lived with an older sister Sandra for brief periods since becoming an adult. There is reference to Sandra looking after Marilyn as a child following the death of their mother from an overdose. Sandra has three young children, is also in an abusive relationship and, although she is sympathetic to Marilyn and has visited her in hospital, feels unable to offer Marilyn support. There are reports of an older brother. Marilyn's African Caribbean father has not been heard of for many years. Marilyn left school at 15 without any qualifications. She has worked for periods in a care home for older people and reportedly enjoyed doing that, but this ended following Marilyn turning up for work one day clearly under the influence of alcohol. Marilyn has not been employed for the past five years.

Marilyn is being discharged on medication for depression but the hospital staff are concerned that without structure she may not take it regularly. On the ward, Marilyn made very little contact with fellow patients and kept to herself. She appears vulnerable and much of the time comes across as withdrawn and unresponsive. She does not know where she will live when she is discharged and the concern is that she is at risk of once again living on the streets.

Learning from user narrative and testimony

Users and carers may be based in organisations that provide training and support to undertake the co-trainer role in the university, and/or training and support may be provided by the university itself. There are now many examples of users and carers working as co-trainers from a range of services including mental health, learning disability older people, care leavers, young people and children.

There is a developing literature discussing the contribution user narratives and testimonies make to teaching. A module at Nottingham University provides an example of the part played by one user group, Advocacy in Action, to learning on a Masters programme. (19) One aspect of their involvement with the programme is in a module in which students as well as people using services make presentations about their lives as a means of experiencing the power of narrative in social work relationships. One aim of this process is to alter the balance of power between the professionals in training and the user group.

Good practice example: University of Nottingham MA/Diploma in Social Work Module L3D761: Users' and carers' perspectives in community care

A number of people with direct experience of social work provide presentations throughout the module. The students are required to present their own life story to the whole group of students, academics, people who use services and their carers, requiring the students to demonstrate their understanding of their own life pattern and development. This exercise in empathy is seen as a critical element in the social workers' ability to form a productive relationship with the user. This experiential model requires the student to consider how people using services and their carers experience the world. They do this by listening to users' and carers' personal experiences and considering the mechanisms by which users and carers become oppressed.

At the University of Bath, involvement in teaching was the start of a more extensive alliance with users and carers. The term 'alliance' has been adopted rather than partnership because of its implications for the management of power relations, an issue which is explored in greater detail in the [Conceptualising partnerships](#) section of this guide. Baldwin and Sadd (20) have written about the involvement of the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network in social work education over a 12-year period. In terms of teaching, the members of the network offer a one-day workshop as part of a series called Discrimination and Empowerment. June Sadd gives an account of the content of the workshop:

We spoke with emotion about our experiences of discrimination, oppression and marginalisation. We told the students (and the lecturers) what it is like to be at the receiving end of services, which is what they wanted. But we gave them more. We spoke in an empowered way. We talked about rights including our right to take risks, our expertise as users... We touched people's hearts. Or in the parlance of social work education, we were challenging people at the level of their value base, where it 'hurts' most. (p3)

There are some significant points which emerge from both these accounts of the use of user narrative and testimony:

- Providing one-off teaching sessions was the most usual route for more extensive involvement in other aspects of partnership in social work education.
- These sessions provoke powerful emotions in the participants. One student comments: 'It feels like real cutting-edge social work – 'in your face' survival told by brave, angry, incredible, defiant people'. (19)
- For some students it is a milestone in terms of their learning about partnership, and is reflected in the quality of their work in practice learning.
- There is a split between those who 'get it' and others who are critical of this approach (20). 'Nothing worries us so much as the students who imply they know all about user involvement and equality and don't need it from people like us!' (19)

The use of conferences

A module taught at London Metropolitan University to social work students and students from community health studies, which includes health visitors and occupational therapists, includes a simulated case conference. Participation in the conference forms part of the assessment of the student's work.

Good practice example: London Metropolitan University BA Social Work - Module CY310: Partnership working and management

Part of the learning and assessment for this module is a simulated case conference, based on a real case, with the students playing various roles. The aim of the conference is to demonstrate key aspects of partnership working. The students must demonstrate attributes of interprofessional working: communication, decision-making and recognition of power imbalances. The students are observed by a panel of users and carers who give feedback to the student on their performance.

e-Learning

The work undertaken for this guide suggests there is evidence of the increased use of e-learning as a teaching and learning resource throughout the social work curriculum. This example of an e-learning project involves a number of professional groups working together on problems related to partnership and collaboration.

Good practice example: University of Bournemouth - Interprofessional learning

An interprofessional curriculum was introduced at Bournemouth in 2005/6 involving social work, nursing (four branches), midwifery, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and operating department practitioner students (650 students). It involves 30 out of 120 credits of study at each of the three years of the programme. This learning is undertaken in interprofessional groups.

- Year 1 – communication skills and preparation for professional practice
- Year 2 – communication skills; risk assessment and risk management

- Year 3 – team working and communication in health and social care

A challenge of this approach to curriculum design and delivery is how to facilitate interprofessional learning, rather than simply the experience of shared teaching, in a meaningful way for both students and educators within the constraints of large student numbers, multi-site teaching and the complexities of the course structures.

A simulated electronic seaside country town, Wessex Bay, was developed as a resource to facilitate student enquiry and effective learning, providing authentic scenarios which can be evolved and developed by educators to represent situations for collaborative practice. It can be used for both interprofessional and uniprofessional teaching and learning.

Wessex Bay, accessed through the Blackboard virtual learning environment, contains public services and potential users, including a university, hospital, care homes, day-care facilities, voluntary and community organisations, and the professionals associated with them. Some case studies have been produced by the user/carer educators working with the social work programme.

A two-year interprofessional project funded project from January 2006:

- builds on previous e-learning projects at Bournemouth (including making practice-based learning work and placements online);
- supports and informs the interprofessional curriculum introduced in 2005/6, using an action learning model.

Using a blended learning approach (21) in interprofessional groups, students are given a trigger to a user/resident, and 'episodes' can be released which develop the scenario. Using the tools of e-learning, bulletin boards can provide updates and synchronous or asynchronous chat-room or discussion-room activity can follow to debate pre-set issues, share interprofessional perspectives, explore dilemmas, and generate effective collaborative strategies for assessment, planning, intervention and review of relevant services.

Wessex Bay scenarios are also used in uniprofessional teaching units, for example in Year 1 (Models of Social Work Intervention), students:

- read relevant book chapters on assessment tools (life road map, genograms etc)
- choose a resident from Wessex Bay
- complete an assessment, photograph it and load it up to the resources area, read about collaborative working
- draw up a plan for collaborative working with this person/family
- consider ethical dilemmas
- arrange a role-play case conference (face to face or online)

- read new developments posted on Wessex Bay
- consider adjustments to the assessment
- consider if new people need to be involved and what information should be shared
- read about social work interventions and decide which one to use with this family (behavioural work, psycho-social casework, crisis intervention etc).

Data collection includes a baseline online survey, end of unit online student feedback, and focus groups with staff and students involved in IPE. External feedback is being provided by staff from other universities who have been given guest access and questions.

The Universities of Sussex and Brighton use an interactive learning resource, Moodle, to support the teaching and learning throughout several modules in its social work degree.

Good practice example: University of Sussex and University of Brighton - BA Hons Social Work, Partnership and Interprofessional Practice, Level 1

Moodle provides students with:

- teaching and learning materials in advance of sessions
- a forum to share the content and experience of working in groups
- a general forum for the total student group to share information, seek support and share information
- a forum where students can raise queries about assessment directed at their peers or the module staff. The e-learning resource provides opportunities to model partnership (student to student, student to educator). It is also a space where knowledge about partnership can be disseminated.

Who should teach partnership work?

The broad scope of partnership networks involved in education requires particular thought to be given to the contributions and roles of different members of the network. There appears to be agreement that teaching about partnership should reflect good partnership practice, although there is also recognition that delivery is time- and resource-intensive for all parties.

Key information from the knowledge review

The research review identified a number of different relationships involved in the teaching of partnership. The practice survey asked the broader question: Who should partnership in social work education involve? With this broader definition in mind, the research review initially identified a number of people involved in partnership working, at seven broad levels:

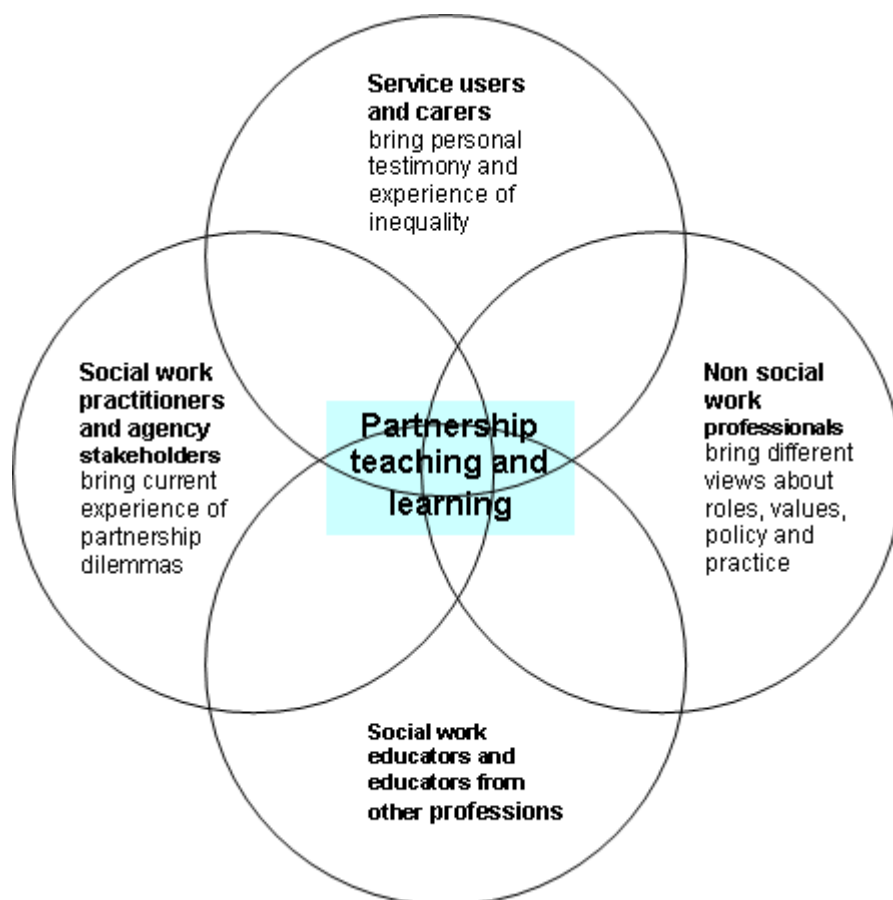
- social work student and user/carer
- student and educator/assessor
- educator/assessor and stakeholder, including users/carers, employers and practitioners
- higher-education institution and stakeholder
- social work student and student from another profession
- social work students with others on the same programme
- social work educators and academics from other disciplines.

As work on the practice survey developed it was recognised that conceptualising partnership as levels of relationships is limited because it is too linear. It did not take sufficient account of the complexities of the interlocking relationships involved in the teaching and learning of partnership and of the modelling of partnership which is such a significant part of social work education.

It is important to reiterate that learning about partnership should be broadly understood to include the processes of observing and learning by experience, which recognise that partnership work takes place throughout the broader course culture when students learn about the realities of partnership by being in the student role.

In terms of the narrower question of who contributes to the teaching of partnership, a more accurate representation of the interacting relationships involved in learning about partnership is suggested by the following diagram:

Diagram 1: Influences in teaching partnership work



Each contributor brings different experience to partnership teaching and, as the diagram suggests, each works in different combinations to meet a range of learning outcomes. The amount of involvement ranges along a continuum from making a contribution to a one-off teaching session to convening a complete module or co-teaching one or more modules at different stages of a course.

The involvement of people who use services and their carers

Courses are required to show that people who use services and their carers are involved in all aspects of social work education. Users and carers as co-trainers provide an introduction to the 'real world', and the 'personal testimony' approach, where people who use services use their experience of social work to inform student learning appears to be particularly important to students at the beginning of the course. (19) Students value these contributions and can experience them as pivotal. For some educators, though, there are questions about how to involve users at levels two and three of the programme, when providing personal testimony is not enough. In some cases this was managed by the educator linking theory and research and the user bringing their perspective from experience. This was felt by some respondents in the practice survey to be rather an unsatisfactory split, with the material from each side being difficult to integrate.

The examples of good teaching practice show that there are ways in which people using services can be more extensively involved at different levels. These examples still seem to be the exception and social work education has some way to go towards integrating users into teaching partnership across the whole curriculum.

The involvement of educators and practitioners from other professions

The most extensive examples of the involvement of other professions in teaching about partnership were found in those courses that offer interprofessional modules. These either involve a range of professionals offering individual sessions or co-management of individual modules across professional boundaries. However, there were examples where other professionals could contribute to student learning in different ways. Some of these contributions were:

- offering different perspectives and experience
- bringing contrasting professional values
- providing opportunities to explore ethical dilemmas
- providing experience of different styles of teaching and learning
- looking critically at different approaches to and understanding of partnership in practice
- the opportunity to explore partnership work and its meaning in different professional contexts.

Such input may sharpen student understanding of the concept and enable the development of interprofessional partnership work.

The involvement of social work practitioners and other agency stakeholders

There is a longstanding tradition of practitioner and manager involvement in social work teaching, going back to before the Diploma in Social Work. The new degree has built on these relationships to further develop models of teaching. Practitioners and managers bring a range of perspectives and knowledge to classroom teaching, including:

- helping students to understand the realities of partnership working in practice
- contributing to the process of integrating theory, research and practice
- raising dilemmas and suggesting resolutions to partnership issues
- providing specific and local information about partnership relationships.

However, responsibility most frequently rests with the social work educator to ensure the material delivered is integrated and appropriate to the relevant level of the course. Although this sounds straightforward, teaching in partnership reflects the dilemmas of partnership working in practice. Central to this is the management of power and clarity of roles and responsibilities.

When should partnership learning take place?

Students and educators agree that user and carer involvement should begin as early as possible, both in programme planning and delivery. For example, students in one focus group commented positively on an opportunity to learn about partnerships with people who use services and their carers early in the course. This took place during a module which bridged classroom and practice learning. At this stage of the degree there is no evidence that partnership learning at an early stage in the course positively affects social work practice or its outcomes.

The timing of interprofessional partnership learning is contested, with concerns about the timing of the establishment and consolidation of professional identity and confidence. Two key timing questions are:

- Should interprofessional partnership learning occur before professional boundaries and stereotypes have become entrenched?
- Does an early focus on interprofessional partnership learning risk diluting professional identity and skills?

We do not yet have a definitive answer to these questions, although most of the examples from the practice survey suggest that discrete modules take place either in the second or third year of the course. There is some research evidence that early shared experiential learning by social work and medical students offers a useful opportunity for interprofessional learning. (7,8) Research into another interprofessional education programme that included students from ten professions argues for the early introduction of interprofessional education. (16) The authors acknowledge that this approach also needs to ensure that students are clear about the relevance of this teaching to their learning needs.

How can students be assessed on partnership work?

There are questions about the extent to which assessment remains the responsibility of educators alone or whether, and in what ways, responsibility can be shared with other stakeholders. There are also issues about which models of assessment are most appropriate to evaluate different aspects of good partnership practice.

Key information from the knowledge review

Most programmes favoured mixed methods of assessment designed to test students' awareness of the complexity of partnership working. Patterns of assessment most frequently sought to evaluate the integration of partnership knowledge, skills and values, and their application to the realities of practice.

The examples in this section come from discrete models of partnership teaching. In integrated approaches, which aim to include aspects of partnership throughout the curriculum in areas such as law and communication skills where it is an essential component of the topic, it is more difficult to attach learning outcomes linked to partnership with particular forms of assessment, and, indeed, learning outcomes require us to make aims and objectives explicit.

Assessment patterns reflect the diversity of the learning aims already identified. Even in modules where partnership is a significant part of the teaching and learning aims, it appears that an over-arching conceptual framework is required to structure the learning. The practice survey identified some of the frameworks used to structure the teaching and therefore shape the pattern of assessment. Interprofessional working is the most usually adopted organising framework; other examples have user collaboration or management as their focus.

The assessment of partnership working demonstrates the following characteristics:

- the use of mixed methods, to reflect learning in relation to knowledge, skills and values
- the assessment of learning about 'partnership in action' in the classroom in preparation for and/or reflection on 'partnership in action' in practice
- an emphasis on real situations to assess the application of learning to practice
- the involvement of a range of stakeholders
- innovative approaches, which enable students to demonstrate a range of knowledge, skills and values.

The use of mixed methods of assessment

Examples of these include presentations, either individual or group, essays exploring set questions on particular topics or a hypothetical case scenario, posters, simulated conferences, learning logs, group projects and reflective writing identifying learning. These different approaches are combined to demonstrate students' understanding of different aspect of partnership and to test their ability to integrate theory and practice.

The review found no examples of examinations being used, either alone or combined with other methods of assessment. On some programmes e-learning is increasingly being used as a resource in developing methods of assessment.

The assessment of 'partnership in action' in the classroom

Partnership learning provides an opportunity to model good practice in the classroom as a means of enabling students to prepare for practice or to reflect on their experience of partnership in practice learning. The most usual vehicle for doing this is groupwork, since it enables students to explore key issues such as power and the management of inequalities. Where groups include different professions the process also provides opportunities for knowledge about working with other aspects of difference, such as roles, values and theoretical approaches. The assessment methods can then require students to consider how knowledge about group processes can be applied to teamwork or to working collaboratively with people who use services and their carers.

The emphasis on 'real' situations to assess the application of learning to practice

The practice survey suggests that students are frequently assessed in the classroom by simulating real dilemmas encountered in practice. For example, a conference format requiring students to take on different roles provides a vehicle for students to demonstrate interprofessional knowledge as well as a range of generic skills such as communication and decision-making. Group assessment tasks can be used to demonstrate similar learning outcomes. In other examples, practice situations were assessed through the use of case material to replicate practice scenarios, or 'real' situations were created through other forms of virtual resources and assessments developed using video and electronic virtual practice environments.

The involvement of a range of stakeholders in the assessment process

The assessment of practice has traditionally involved practitioners as partners in the assessment process. There were a range of examples of other professionals (both educators and practitioners) being involved in assessment although this can be difficult to formalise in some university systems. There is also a considerable literature discussing the place of student peer and self-assessment in social work education. (22,23,24) Questions remain about the extent to which these stakeholders are centrally involved in assessment decisions. This point is developed by Crisp et al (25) in their survey of current literature exploring stakeholder involvement in the assessment process:

what is less clear is the extent to which persons other than social work academics are involved in final summative assessments. It may well be that ... some stakeholders were involved only in formative assessments which offer feedback to students but do not contribute to a final grade being assigned. (p 732)

At the time the practice survey was completed, relatively few examples were found of people who use services taking a formal role in assessment. The process requires time and resources, appropriate training, attention to confidentiality, representation and

avoidance of tokenism. However, there were some examples of initiatives taking place which involved people who use services at the heart of assessment decisions:

- as co-markers in written assessments
- as co-assessors in observing presentations or simulated conferences
- in 'conversation' with students to assess readiness for practice
- in developing, teaching and assessing a complete module
- by providing feedback for individual portfolios, moderating during practice assessment panels and/or playing a direct role in the assessment of classroom-based workshops exploring practice issues.

In the literature, the use of user and carer feedback to students has a number of advocates. Jackson and Morris (3) report that the use of consumer feedback for assessment purposes in practice placements is particularly helpful; Wikler (26) notes the usefulness of parents' feedback to students on their interview skills; Scheyett and Kim (27) and Shor and Sykes (28) report on informal feedback from consumers of mental health services on a facilitated dialogue with social work students.

In 2005 Ager et al undertook an audit survey of social work courses in Scotland. (5) At that point they found that no courses formally required feedback from people using services to be included in practice assessment: 75 per cent of practice assessors and students said they 'always' sought feedback from users, while only two of the 28 users could give examples of being involved in assessment. The authors comment on this discrepancy:

This raises the question of whether some involvement in assessment, perceived by practice teachers, is aspirational (p 471).

The practice survey suggested that, increasingly, people who use services are being asked to provide feedback on students' performance in practice learning, but their involvement is not always formalised and the weight given to their views is not always transparent.

There are similar examples of users being involved in university-based assessment, but where they are given little power and responsibility. (25) There is evidence that this situation may have shifted somewhat and examples of recent developments in assessment partnerships are considered in more detail in the [Ways forward](#) section of this guide.

Innovative approaches to assessment

There was evidence from the review that educators were aware that partnership assessment methods should reflect the complexity of the subject. The practice survey suggested that in some cases their response to this has been to develop some innovative approaches to assessment, specifically those which require students to integrate their learning in relation to knowledge, skills and practice. Examples of this integrated approach to assessment are given in the good practice examples.

Developments in the assessment of partnership also include the increasing involvement of students in self- and peer-assessment.

Proponents of self- and peer-assessments claim they focus on the students' capacities to assess themselves, to make judgements about their learning (and that of their peers) and to evaluate what has been learnt. (25)

This can include formative assessments during groupwork, self-assessments evaluating the process of learning and student contributions to formal assessments.

How can students be assessed on partnership work? Good practice

The knowledge review identified a number of examples of stakeholder involvement in the assessment of practice learning. Many of these were longstanding and built on collaborative arrangements which had existed since the delivery of Diploma in Social Work programmes. In contrast, few examples of the assessment of teaching and learning in the classroom had been identified. However, since 2005, evidence from publications and work undertaken for this resource guide suggest that considerable development has taken place in this area. (19) Admittedly this is happening from a very low base in terms of numbers, but the requirements of the degree have provided added impetus to an area which had not previously been given sufficient attention.

Academics, people who use services and their carers working in partnership

Involving people using services and their carers in the process of assessment models a reversal of the usual power relationship. The examples given here include assessment that counts towards a grade or pass/fail, and formative assessment with an emphasis on feedback. In each example, users and carers are given training and support to engage in this role.

Good practice example: University of Nottingham - MA/Diploma in Social Work, module L3D761: Users' and carers' perspectives in community care

Since 1990, Advocacy in Action has provided student placements. In a themed edition of Social Work Education, about user involvement in social work education, the organisation traces the development of its role from the assessment of student practice to involvement in a variety of classroom-based assessment. (19)

Its role has developed from completing early checklists about Advocacy in Action's experience of students' work (e.g.: do they care about and respect us? do they treat us as equal people?) to a 12-step experiential assessment framework that can be used in the classroom or in placement. Built into the framework are opportunities for the evaluation of the assessment process and outcomes when participants reflect on what worked and make suggestions for future changes. The article concludes that:

Throughout this experiential assessment process the framework energises and learns from partnerships within as it continuously experiences, incorporates and reshapes to meet their collaborative requirements. (p 343)

Advocacy in Action working with the University of Nottingham is the only example we are aware of where users and carers are completely responsible for the assessment of a module. The group's involvement with this module explores one aspect of its involvement with assessment throughout the programme.

The example from the University of Plymouth, described by Elliott and colleagues, (29) demonstrates how people who use services and their carers may be involved in providing feedback which counts in the assessment of whether students are safe to practice and to embark on their first placement.

Good practice example: University of Plymouth - BSc Hons Health and Social Care Management: The service user conversation (Level 1, term 1)

One of the users who took part in the assessment describes it as a 'breakthrough concept for student learning' (p 465). People who use services and their carers take part in assessing whether students are safe for practice. This takes place at an early stage of the course and students are prepared for the conversation through an earlier module, which includes opportunities for practising conversations through role play.

Students and users or carers are matched in pairs and take part in an individual conversation. A wide range of users and carers are involved and conversations take place in different venues, such as the university or practice agencies. The students then write an account of their view of the 'qualities of a good social worker'. They receive formative feedback 'in conversation' with a user or carer. 'The user/carer is invited to:

- comment on whether the student made it clear as to why they were there
- comment on whether the student listened actively
- verify the student's report and whether it was an accurate representation of the conversation'. (p 458)

Students are given the opportunity to respond to this feedback, which is then evaluated by the same user, whose view affects the marking process.

Elliott and her colleagues identify a number of advantages to using this form of assessment at an early stage in the course. These include assessing:

- communication skills
- an initial ability to link theory with practice
- accurate note-taking
- ability to reflect.

This innovation has been evaluated and the idea has been developed at other stages of the course. During the second year, when students are completing an 80-day placement there is a similar process of working with a person who uses services who gives feedback on the student's evaluation of what they did on placement and how they are progressing. This provides the student with additional feedback from a user perspective on how they are developing in the social work role.

The examples from the Universities of Sussex and Brighton and London Metropolitan University are of user and carer participation in the assessment of group presentations about partnership work, which in both cases count towards a grade. In the University of Sussex/Brighton example, students reported feeling more anxious about the views of the user/carers than about the views of academic staff. The presence of the user and carer made them more concerned to get it right.

Good practice example: University of Sussex and University of Brighton - BA Hons Social Work, Partnership and Interprofessional Practice, Level 1: Assessed group presentation

The group presentation is assessed by the two staff facilitators and two users and carers who have contributed to the teaching. Each of the following criteria are equally weighted; a group mark of up to 30 per cent is available:

- how well the group identifies the interprofessional issues in the case study and the theories and research that help to understand them;
- how well the group demonstrates an initial understanding of interprofessional partnership with users and carers as it applies to practice with the case study (Marilyn – see [case scenario 2](#));
- how well the group plans interprofessional practice with Marilyn;
- how well the group evaluates collaboration by the study group in preparation for the presentation;
- how well the presentation demonstrates coherence (including time management), accessibility and creativity.

Combined assessment of classroom and practice learning

The University of Bath provides one of the closest examples we have found to a model more typically found in the USA, of community-based practice learning initiatives where students are encouraged to work with and learn from users as community members and as resources, rather than as victims (see Good practice example on Partnership and Interprofessional Practice).

Good practice example: University of Bath - BSc Social Work and Applied Social Sciences

A community project combines university teaching with practice learning. The main outcome of the teaching and learning is the completion of a community needs assessment.

Students are assessed individually, on their groupwork and also their learning from the practice element of the project. Individual assessment consists of a written assignment, which makes up 70 per cent of the assessment mark. This also contains self-assessment, asking students to look critically at their learning by using material from their learning logs. This critical reflection requires students to think about how their knowledge, skills and awareness of social work values have developed during the course of the project. Knowledge includes use of material discussing, for example, community profiling, social research and concepts of need.

The group assessment consists of a project report which receives a single mark. Each report has to include a signed appendix which outlines the contribution made by each student.

The project also requires students to provide additional evidence of competence to contribute to the assessment of practice.

Learning and assessing partnership work in practice

I think the barriers we are going to come up against most are the practice attitudes that exist in social work ... We've been taught to work in conjunction with social workers in other agencies and for a consensus to be reached and that's not the attitude of the majority of the social workers whose teams we are working in. To fight against that is going to be one of the great problems. But I am not sure that battling against those attitudes is something that can be taught on a course. I think it's about being strong enough to say that's what I believe in and this is the way this should be done, to your colleagues. Which is a hard thing to do when they have a lot more seniority and experience but just because they've got seniority and experience doesn't mean they are doing things the right way. (Student social worker)

The University of Plymouth, consistent with partnership practice elsewhere on its programme, involves users and carers in the assessment of practice learning as follows. This example, which is similar to others identified in the practice survey, illustrates the involvement of people who use services in all stages of the practice learning process.

Good practice example: University of Plymouth - BSc Hons Health and Social Care Management: service user roles in assessment

Practice portfolios - The practice portfolio includes a care plan or review. One person who uses services discusses these plans with a group of three or four students and gives formative feedback to each student from a user perspective. Students are expected to note and respond to this feedback.

Moderating panels - Users are involved in moderating placement portfolios, giving the exam board their views about the quality of evidence and decision-making. There has been joint training for users, practitioners and university staff.

The 12-point assessment framework developed by Advocacy in Action, (19) can be used in both classroom and practice learning. The following quote highlights their role in assessing practice learning, giving the example of partnership in the designing partnership agreements:

We were especially proud of the partnership agreement. Because we built it up together it was truly owned and committed to by everyone. It was an open, non-punitive and empowering framework that valued potential, effort and contribution, encouraged learning, respectful challenge and risk-taking, and accommodated mistakes kindly. It permitted a working relationship based on mutual support and respect which felt safe enough to discuss difficulties, problems and conflicts as they arose and to celebrate achievements all round. (p 376)

Methods of assessment

The exploration in this section of assessing partnership working has highlighted a number of characteristics.

- Mixed methods of assessment are required to assess the range of learning outcomes involved.
- These methods should be tailored to the assessment of knowledge, skills and values.
- Assessment should model good partnership practice by including a range of different stakeholders throughout the assessment process.

The last point implies that managing and learning about power differences should be a priority in the aims of assessment.

The partnership and participation module at London South Bank University exemplifies these characteristics.

Good practice example: London South Bank University - Module: Partnership and participation, BA Level 2 Social Work and BSc Level 2 Nursing and Social Work Studies

The partnership and participation module (see [Good practice example: London South Bank University](#)) uses posters to evaluate the learning alongside reflective writing and a group presentation. The method of assessment has changed during the last two years, although the assessment continues to involve a nurse and social work educator.

A weighting of 60 per cent is given to the design of an individual poster requiring students to represent their learning in relation to professional partnerships. Alongside the posters students also have to complete a bibliography and a 1000-word reflective summary which critically evaluates their partnership skills.

The other 40 per cent of the assessment consists of the group presentation. Each student group makes a 30-minute presentation, selecting three key concepts from a list including collaboration, communication, roles and boundaries in partnership working. They are required to relate these concepts to a case scenario. Students must also demonstrate a critical understanding of theories and the ability to demonstrate appropriate skills such as time management and coherence.

On their own, mixed methods are not sufficient to deliver the required outcomes in terms of assessing the complexity of partnership working. The poster, groupwork using a case scenario and reflective commentary are designed to target learning about partnership knowledge, skills and values. The convenor of this module regards the assessment methods outlined here as 'work in progress' since assessment has to be responsive to changes in available resources and the learning environment.

Evaluating partnership work with people who use services and their carers

Many of us would hesitate to commission a group of academics, users and carers to evaluate user and carer involvement in our social work programmes and to disseminate the outcomes publicly. Middlesex University provides one such enterprise.

Good practice example: Middlesex University - Social Work Programmes

Five users and carers and three academics critically evaluated user and carer involvement, using Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. Arnstein suggests that the eight rungs of the ladder represent degrees of involvement ranging from non-participation at levels 1 and 2, to tokenism on the next three rungs to citizen power on the top three levels or rungs on the ladder.

Arnstein's ladder		
Level or rung	Nature of the partnership	Nature of citizen participation
8	citizen control	degrees of citizen power
7	delegated	degrees of citizen power
6	partnership	degrees of citizen power
5	placation	degrees of tokenism
4	consultation	degrees of tokenism
3	informing	degrees of non-participation
2	therapy	degrees of non-participation
1	manipulation	degrees of non-participation

Arnstein, S, first published (1969) as 'A ladder of citizen participation in the USA' in Journal of American Institute of Planners 35.

In evaluating themselves, Allain and colleagues (30) concluded that they initially felt they were a public relations vehicle, on rung 1 (manipulation), moved relatively quickly to rung 4 (consultation) and then to rung 5 (placation), where they felt they were given every assistance in articulating their priorities. At the time of writing the article they felt they had reached rung 6 (partnership) 'where we are just beginning to negotiate a more effective participatory role' (pp 404-412).

Ways forward: Introduction

This section draws together the key issues identified throughout this resource guide and suggests some factors that need to be considered in taking forward partnership learning, both in theory and in practice. These fall into four areas:

- Recent thinking on the concept of partnership
- Signposts provided by good practice in teaching and learning
- Developments in partnership working, in particular the active involvement of people who use services and their careers
- An evolving model for partnership working.

Ways forward: Conceptualising partnership

The confusion about how to define partnership continues to be significant. Evidence from this guide suggests it is important to achieve greater clarity in our understanding of partnership for a number of reasons:

- Partnership is significant in its own right. It is not an add-on to other issues, nor is it a commonsense and self-evident concept. It therefore warrants greater attention in relation to theory development.
- The knowledge review argued that partnership has different meanings in different contexts. A more nuanced understanding of the concept of partnership would enable teaching and learning to be more effectively planned and targeted.
- Unless we achieve greater clarity in our understanding of the concept of partnership, the effectiveness of teaching and learning is difficult for stakeholders to evaluate.

Recent research exploring partnership work and the involvement of stakeholders in a range of settings provides some pointers to encourage greater clarity in the concept of partnership and in defining the different elements of partnership.

The meaning behind a word

It is important to recognise that confusion within the discourse on partnership is about more than a name. It also reflects the complexities of fast-changing policy and practice.

Fifteen years after [Tunnard's definition of partnership](#), Clarke and colleagues (31) suggest that 'partnership' and 'respect' comprise two New Labour keywords.

- Partnership refers to negotiated practice in which users are active participants engaged with professionals in deciding on a course of action. In their research most users believed that professionals knew best and wanted access to professional expertise, but identified the most effective partnerships were those resulting from a negotiation between those with personal experience and those with professional expertise.
- Respect is a consistent theme among people who use services. This includes users' views about how they should be perceived, addressed and treated, and that indifference, impersonality, inattentiveness or rudeness all constitute a lack of respect.

Baldwin and Sadd, in their discussion of partnership work between the University of Bath and the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network, (20) describe how they now use the word 'ally' rather than 'partner'. They view 'partnership' as implying equal power between partners which is clearly false as power lies with the academic institution. 'Ally' 'allows for a meaningful relationship based on respect and being valued, despite and probably because of inequalities among its members' (p 353). Significantly they also discuss the importance of acknowledging power differences:

Having acknowledged that inequality, we make every attempt to redress the imbalance, from the strategic level to the level of individual practice, precisely because we have acknowledged the power imbalance' (p 353).

Finally, Branfield et al (32) offer the term 'networking' as crucial for positive user participation. Networking allows people who use services to be able to work collectively for change and mutual support, and to make their experience, views and ideas known in a context and culture which too often erects barriers to users and carers, or where they lack resources to develop and share their knowledge. Networking is a means for people using services to increase credibility and visibility.

In summary:

Author(s)	Keywords	Main concepts
Tunnard	sharing, respect, power sharing	Each partner has something to contribute with power shared and roles respected. Such partnerships are backed by legal and moral rights.
Clarke et al	partnership linked to respect	People who use services identify respect as a key component of partnership. Indifference, impersonality and rudeness demonstrate a lack of respect.
Baldwin and Sadd	ally	'Ally' rather than 'partner' emphasises the quality of respect which redresses inevitable power imbalance.
Branfield et al	networking	Networking enables people who use services to work together to provide mutual support. Networking increases credibility and visibility.

Emerging themes

With the exception of the article by Baldwin and Sadd, the authors cited above are not specifically discussing partnership within social work education. However, some of the concepts they discuss can be applied to the complex stakeholder partnerships required in the delivery of social work education. Particularly significant are the management of unequal power and the importance of respect, both of which appear to be relevant to the maintenance of effective partnerships with all stakeholder groups.

These themes are also evident in the National Occupational Standards for Social Care. (33) The requirement to demonstrate respect is included as a core aspect of values and ethics throughout the National Occupational Standards key roles and units. For example, the indicative knowledge base for Key Role 1 identifies:

respect for each person as an individual, and respect for the 'dignity and privacy of individuals, families, carers, groups and communities' as core values (p 19).

Networking is the focus of Key Role 2, Unit 7 by which, among other requirements, social workers must be able to:

examine with individuals, families, carers, groups, communities and others support networks which can be accessed and developed

- identify and collate information:
 - on possible networks that could be accessed locally, regionally and nationally
 - that will enable networks to be developed to meet assessed needs and planned outcomes
- provide information on, and discuss and clarify, the range of networks that could meet needs and achieve planned outcomes (p 48).

The management of power is less straightforward and is related to the appropriate use of legal powers and responsibilities and to the concept of empowering people who use services and their carers, for example providing information and support (such as Key Role 3).

The knowledge review provided also provided some evidence that these issues were recognised by stakeholders in social work education. For example, student participants in the Practice Survey commented that partnership provided a framework for learning about power relations and respect:

Partnership is about giving up power.

It comes down to basic respect for each other.

It comes down to the basic standards and humanist principles of social work, really.

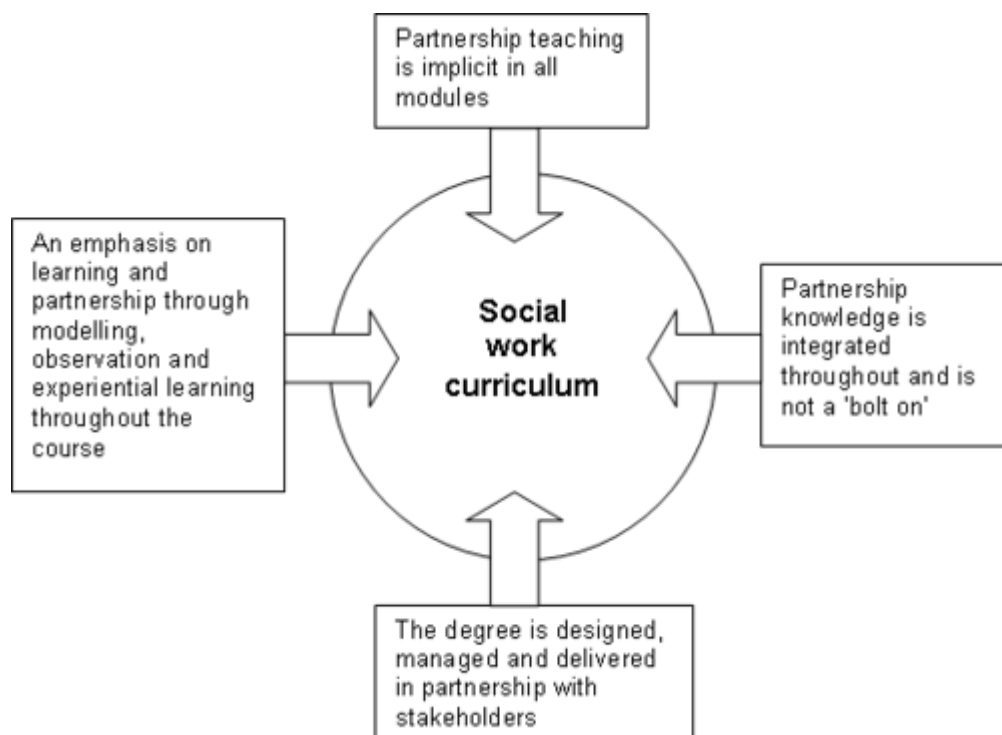
They linked good partnership practice with social work values and anti-oppressive practice.

Similar themes have been highlighted in accounts of partnership work with a range of stakeholders. (20,29,34) While these accounts suggest that partnership education 'on the ground' is at least keeping pace with and maybe in advance of conceptual development, the conceptual confusion about the distinctive nature of partnership remains.

Ways forward: Good practice in teaching and learning about partnership working

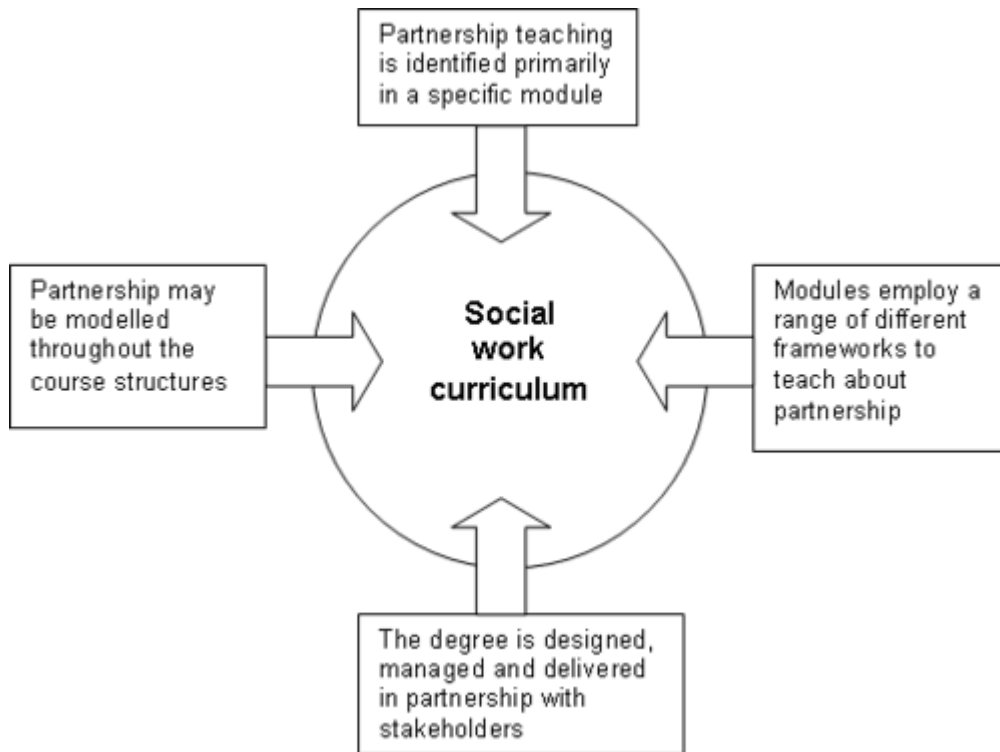
The knowledge review identified two main approaches to teaching partnership – the embedded and the discrete (see [How is partnership work taught?](#)), which can be summarised in two diagrams. Neither approach is mutually exclusive, although the review identified few examples of programmes which adopted both approaches. Each approach suggests different priorities while emphasising social work values and anti-oppressive practice.

Characteristics of the embedded approach



This approach emphasises learning by experiencing and observing partnerships throughout all aspects of the course culture. Modelling partnership working is a significant method of teaching and learning.

Characteristics of the discrete approach



In this approach the main vehicle for delivering learning about partnership is in a discrete module. (although, as this guide demonstrates through its examples, this is not always specifically about 'partnership'). Programmes adopting this approach to teaching partnership also sought to model effective partnership working in their overall design and delivery.

Both approaches were advocated by different respondents in the practice survey and examples of good practice were identified within both the embedded and discrete frameworks (see [Why teach partnership work? Good practice](#)). However, neither has been systematically evaluated so we are not yet in a position to identify which approach is more effective in delivering specific learning outcomes.

Similarly, in understanding partnership working more generally (in practice learning or in the management of programmes, for example) we have no way of knowing which aspects are working well or how to generalise from individual examples of good practice to general principles.

We need to move from an approach to partnership learning which accepts it is happening and that it is essential, to a more thought-through and systematic understanding of where and why partnership learning is effective. More informed choices could then be made about the design and delivery of teaching and learning.

The review identified some distinctive initiatives in partnership learning which provide some evidence of effectiveness.

The structured dialogue

'Structured dialogue' provides opportunities for students to hear from people who use services about their experiences of illness, of life and of the 'helping' professions. (12,27,28) The encounters between students and people who use services are guided by facilitators. They take responsibility for introducing themes for discussion, ensuring that the conversation flows, and that all participants have a voice. This initiative is described as successful. The authors conclude that there is strong potential for the structured dialogue model to improve student attitudes towards, and learning about, people with mental illness, and to undermine the one-dimensional representations and pre-existing stereotypes with which students may start out.

Feedback from users and carers contributing to structured dialogue sessions indicated its validating and empowering potential for them. Two-thirds of the social work students in the Shor and Sykes study felt that the structured dialogue with people with mental illness 'opened their eyes to the person behind the illness' p 67).

Learning within practice

This resource guide has identified several examples of modelling good practice in practice learning (see [Why teach partnership work? Good practice](#)). Respondents to the practice survey suggested that negotiating placements, the development of learning agreements and assessment of portfolios were all examples of partnership in action.

However, we have not identified any examples of a 'partnership curriculum' in practice learning. A defined partnership curriculum would not simply involve learning through modelling (where learning can be difficult to identify) but would also involve the identification of specific learning outcomes. It would also require students to be provided with structured opportunities to learn about partnership and to demonstrate competence.

The reasons why such a curriculum has not been developed are explained by some of the general characteristics of partnership already identified in this guide:

- that partnership working is assumed to be taking place in practice, so practice settings are the places where students will inevitably learn how to work effectively in partnership;
- developments in integrated service provision mean that partnership learning will inevitably take place; students will learn about partnership because it is happening all around them;
- the National Occupational Standards do not currently require partnership competence to be demonstrated, although the Social Care Code of Practice does (see [Regulatory requirement](#));
- the concept of partnership remains under-developed and difficult to identify.

Educators in the practice survey commented on the serendipitous nature of partnership learning that may or may not happen in practice settings. Respondents interviewed for this guide identified the managerialist culture in some agencies and resource limitations as continuing problems in developing meaningful partnerships with all stakeholders in practice. While a more systematic 'curriculum' would not change this, it would enable students to identify their learning about the complexity of partnership and for other stakeholders to provide specific learning opportunities. In an interview undertaken for this guide one educator felt there was now a greater focus on checking partnership learning during meetings with students and practice assessors. This reflected the reality of practice, in which partnership issues were higher on the agenda than in the past.

Ways forward: Developments in partnership working

The work undertaken for this resource guide identifies other aspects of education practice which have been developing since the review was completed. The literature and interviews with educators suggest a move towards increasing the range of stakeholders involved and an increase in the extent and depth of user involvement. (35) One educator described the decision to involve more diverse user groups in partnership work during the last few years. Another respondent outlined the increased involvement of people who use services at strategic levels in programme management, an issue also raised in the article by Baldwin and Sadd. (20)

We have chosen to highlight here recent developments in user involvement in strategic management and university-based assessment. This is partly because they identify some of the positive changes taking place which have been discussed in the literature, but also because these examples illustrate some of the complexities and ongoing dilemmas of making partnership work a reality in the current educational context.

Involvement of people who use services in governance

In discussing their 2004 audit of qualifying social work programmes in Scotland, Ager et al (5) found (with some exception at the Open University in Scotland) very little evidence of user and carer involvement in the governance of education programmes. This finding was reflected in the review, in which the model of the Service User and Carer (CU) Group at the University of Dundee probably came closest to illustrating this aspect of partnership (see [Why teach partnership work? Good practice](#)).

One of the respondents to the review, the University of Plymouth, was re-interviewed for this resource guide. In a programme in which users and their carers had been extensively involved in the design and delivery of the degree since the programme started, the main focus now was to increase their involvement at a strategic and management level. The university reported:

- confidence of people who use services had increased as the programme developed

- the group was now more involved in formal forums making decisions about strategy and governance – an example of this was facilitating a day for employers, exploring strategic developments
- the next potential area of development identified was to offer training for user involvement in committees.

June Sadd (5) comments on the advantages of user involvement in the programme management group (PMG):

Being part of the PMG opened many more doors to us ... When focused work was needed to develop the programme we became members of the many task groups in our role as agency member ... being part of these groups afforded the same respect and strengthened us in our self-empowerment (p 353).

She later comments that some people who use services chose not to take part at a strategic level as 'the discussions at the PMG do not seem meaningful to them' (p 354). This suggests that for some users problems remain in achieving valid roles and status. Other respondents identified resource limitations as the main barriers to taking forward greater involvement in strategic developments, including:

- lack of certainty about funding from the General Social Care Council and within the university
- whether the 'hidden costs' to all stakeholders could continue to be borne in a resource-limited environment
- the benefit and other bureaucratic difficulties affecting payments to people who use services.

Involvement of people who use services in university-based assessment

Since the review was completed developments in assessment have been reflected in the literature. (36,37) Some examples of these developments model good partnership practice and relate to increasing user involvement in assessment. From Advocacy in Action (19):

It is the process of service delivery, its underlying values and power relationships that people on the receiving end are best placed to experience and to assess. (p 339)

The research review identified few examples of stakeholders being centrally involved in assessments. Various explanations were given for this situation, including the lack of flexibility in university systems, particularly in relation to assessment, the time involved in training and the complexity of co-assessment. At that stage, people who use services were more likely to be involved in the assessment of practice by making evaluative contributions to student portfolios. Cuming and Wilkins (38) suggest some of the issues to consider in order to ensure involvement is real rather than tokenistic:

- Involvement in practice assessment involves preparation by the practice assessor, who should indicate that user views will be sought at the outset.
- Clear criteria must be provided that relate to social work competencies.
- Resources are required to provide relevant training so that involvement is meaningful.

A range of literature published since the knowledge review further explores some of the complexities of co-assessment with users in the classroom. In one example, *Advocacy in Action* and colleagues from the University of Nottingham provide a valuable discussion of some of the specific challenges of user-led assessment in a context of entrenched university processes. (19) The ideas presented were developed as a result of a longstanding partnership with a group of people who use services and highlight issues which should be considered when developing collaborative models of assessment:

- user assessment, essential in social work training where social workers become the assessors and people who use services the assessed;
- the necessity to develop creative approaches to work out assessment processes that are meaningful to users and can be accommodated by university systems;
- a culture that supports taking risks;
- the importance of a university-based contact to mediate process between university systems and user educators;
- the value of supportive feedback from past students.

This example highlights the importance of developing a culture which is ready to push the boundaries of assessment practice in a number of ways. As the number of students graduating with social work degrees increases, their views are likely to be increasingly significant. Educators re-interviewed for this guide suggest users and carers are a significant resource in relation to assessment and it is likely that they will begin to take a more prominent role in other aspects of programme development.

Ways forward: Towards a model of partnership working for social work education

In this section we attempt to integrate some of the key issues in research and practice that should be taken into consideration in order to develop an initial model of partnership education for social work.

For clarity the model is outlined in three stages, although these developments should be understood as a process rather than separate entities. The three stages identify the characteristics of different phases of partnership education. The layers in the diagrams do not imply any ranking in the importance of the each of the characteristics. We suggest that a 'strong' model of partnership working (represented by Stage 3) requires the integration of our current knowledge about partnership derived from research, with the knowledge and experience of good practice derived from teaching and learning involving a range of different stakeholders.

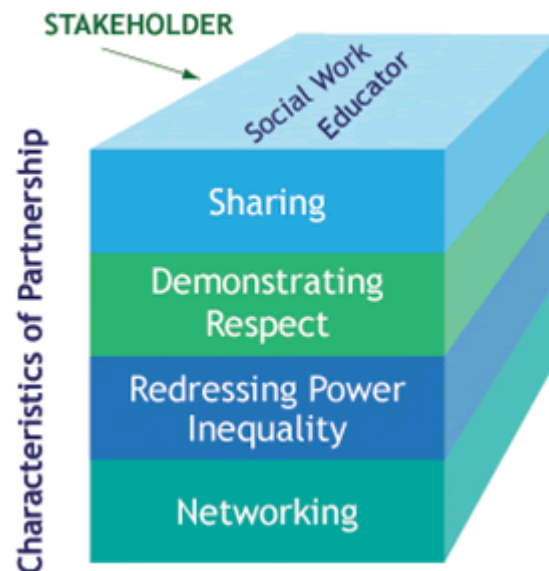
Stage 1: Partnership characteristics

The characteristics of effective partnership working identified in current research and outlined at the beginning of this section provide the basis of an initial 'partnership curriculum', which can be drawn on by social work educators. Research suggests effective rather than tokenistic elements of partnership working include:

- sharing
- demonstrating respect
- redressing power inequality
- networking.

Although these characteristics have not always been identified specifically in social work or social work education contexts, they are congruent with social work values and can be applied to the complex partnerships required in social work education.

Diagram: Stage 1



This approach to partnership learning is incomplete or 'weak' since:

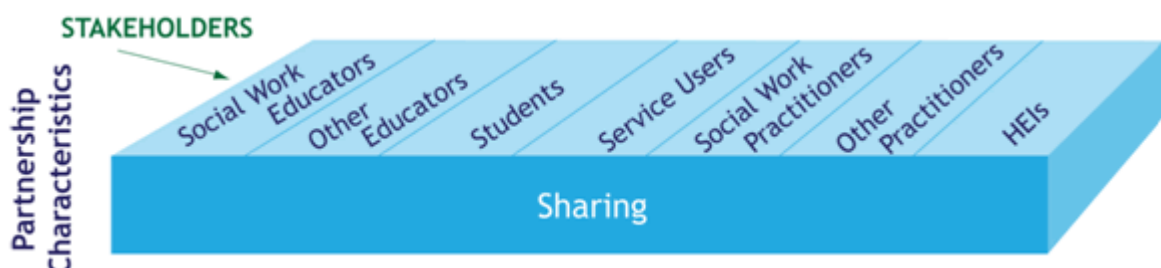
- learning takes place only within the social work educator's frame of reference
- partnership is not modelled throughout the educational process.

Stage 2: Partnership networks

At this stage partnership education is enhanced by the involvement of a network of stakeholders, including practitioners, people who use services and their carers, students and educational establishments, in different aspects of partnership education. This has the potential to contribute a range of perspectives and experience to the educational process and to model good 'partnership in action'.

This guide identifies a range of examples of creative practice in relation to stakeholder involvement, and recent developments highlighted in this section (see [Developments in partnership working](#)) also suggest that educators are continuing to develop their understanding of partnership work in order to model effective partnership working and enhance learning opportunities.

Diagram: Stage 2

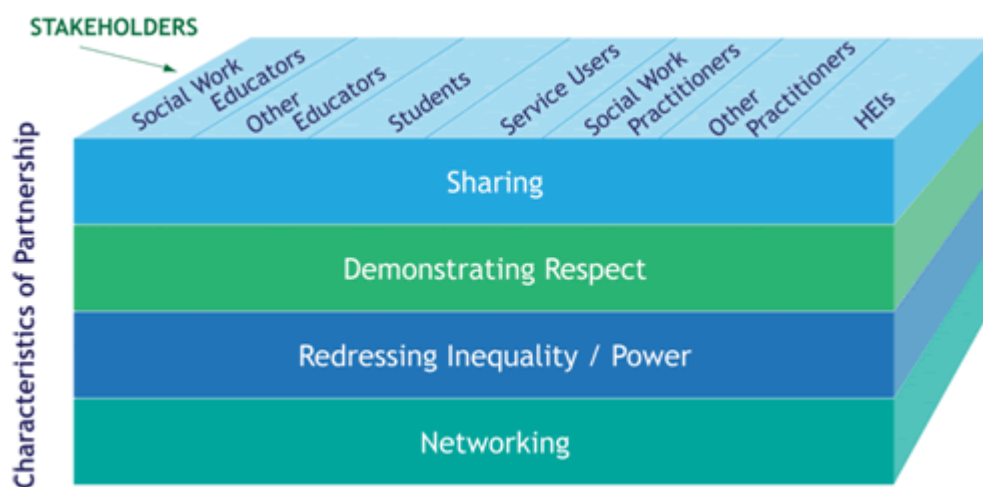


However, the characteristics of partnership, particularly the lack of conceptual clarity and its 'taken for granted' nature, create particular problems in taking some of these ideas forward. We are at an early stage in evaluating the effectiveness of different stakeholder contributions to partnership learning and, indeed, identifying the learning which is required to achieve good quality partnership working. This is demonstrated by the lack of a partnership curriculum in practice learning. The presence of stakeholder partnerships is not sufficient in itself to ensure that a critical understanding of partnership work in all its complexity is a core element of the educational process.

Stage 3: The 'partnership cube'

The third stage of the model outlined here suggests that a stronger model of partnership working needs to combine knowledge about the characteristics of effective partnership working drawn from research, with knowledge and experience of good partnership practice derived from all aspects of the educational process. The principles and practices of partnership working would then not only relate to the characteristics identified with Stage 1 but also extend to all stakeholders creating a strong, integrated 'partnership cube' having depth as well as width.

Diagram: Stage 3



It is argued that this combination of resources has a greater potential to:

- increase understanding of the concept of partnership
- take the risks which are required for creative development of partnership work
- recognise and manage the dilemmas and conflicts involved in partnership working
- develop strategies for 'deep' as well as 'wide' partnership networks
- respond to the need for partnership learning in practice
- continue to develop partnership working in organisations which may not be sympathetic and where resources are limited.

We have an initial understanding of what stakeholders (mostly people who use services and their carers) identify as the key characteristics of partnership working. However,

more needs to be done to explore what makes partnership effective and what similarities and differences there are, if any, between partnership work with users/carers and partnership work with professionals. In a resource-limited environment there is still more work to be done to develop partnership education in practice learning and to respond creatively to the dilemmas and opportunities of partnership working in the university.

Conclusion

Recognising that this three-stage model is very much a 'work in progress' we hope it contributes to the development of a greater understanding of partnership working in social work education.

While this guide has highlighted some of the dilemmas involved in understanding the concept of partnership and of working in partnership, it has also identified examples of good practice which emerged from the knowledge review's research review and practice survey. Subsequent work for this guide suggests that partnership continues to be a key issue for social work education. It is one that receives considerable attention from stakeholders, and progress has been made in finding creative solutions to the challenges and complexities involved in achieving good partnership practice.

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