

COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

RESPONSE FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL WORK

ADSW is the professional organisation representing senior social work managers in Scottish local authorities. ADSW is an independent voice of social work leadership in Scotland. It exists to promote social justice and protect the interests of the people who use social work and social care services. We do this by:

- influencing and advising parliament, local and national government in relation to policy and legislation
- promoting social justice and the needs of vulnerable citizens
- assisting members and their councils in implementing policy and legislation
- developing, supporting and promoting best practice and innovation
- providing comment and opinion to the media

This submission represents the collective view of the Association and has been endorsed by our Executive Committee. It has also been shared with SOLACE and COSLA.

Background to the ADSW response

The Commission will be aware of the recent debates regarding the future of social care. Three of the four main political parties in the Scottish Parliament now appear to agree that there should be some form of amalgamation of adult social care and health care services.

As the professional body for senior social work managers, our response to your commission on the future delivery of public services is framed in terms of this debate.

ADSW is not concerned with defending the status quo. Any model of service delivery can always be improved upon and we are eager to participate in discussions that identify, quantify and begin to address the barriers to improvement. For example, we know that a huge amount of time, effort and resource are consumed in discussing responsibilities and liabilities between agencies, which could be better used delivering services; we also know that the separate accountabilities of the nationally directed health service and of local authority social work services often drive these organisations to pursue different targets and objectives.

We are not opposed to radical and new ideas: ADSW has been at the forefront of the implementation of Changing Lives, the Review of Social Work in 21st century, representing transformational change in relation to leadership, governance and self directed care. The core values and principles of social work are based on promoting the interests of individuals who need care, protection and support, not on preserving any particular model of service delivery.

The main issues influencing the future delivery of social work services

ADSW is aware that the existing pattern of service provision to all the people who use our services is becoming unworkable under present and predicted circumstances. The pressure of demographics, reducing resources and of higher expectations from the people who use our services all exist within a context of unprecedented volumes of demand – from an expanding, ageing population expecting more independence, control and choice; from a drug and alcohol misuse pandemic; from increasing numbers of children and young adults with learning disabilities who have the same rights to choice and independence as the rest of us; from our overcrowded prisons; from increasing numbers of children neglected and abused; and from whole sections of our communities who are deprived, disadvantaged and disenfranchised.

We must tackle these pressures. In so doing, we have an opportunity to transform the way we deliver social work services into a model that is workable, sustainable and co-produced with citizens, rather than designed for and provided to them.

The process for reassessing the delivery of public services

ADSW is concerned that the debate on the future delivery of adult social care has so far concentrated on organisational structure. Seeking a structural solution as the first step in addressing a problem is wrong; it is ineffective and inefficient displacement activity. Until now, the debate has taken place in a vacuum, focusing solely on adult health and social care and not effectively assessing the impact that restructuring in this area would have on other areas of social work and health provision; on services for children; on housing.

In considering how best to address the very real issues posed by providing care into the future, not only to our older population, but to all the people who use our services, we would associate ourselves with the core principles set out by COSLA in their response to your Commission:

- Public Services need to be focused on the improvement of outcomes – to plan for outcomes, to budget for outcomes and to be accountable for outcomes.
- An outcomes approach demands integrated local delivery and funding arrangements, which are accountable to a local democratic body – this should be the default position, with alternatives being considered only where the co-ordination or discharge of duties is impossible or less efficient at a local level.
- Local democratic accountability for locally-delivered services needs to be strengthened.
- Public services need to be responsive to local needs, to be enabling and to build on local assets in order to maximise citizen engagement and empowerment.
- Public policy needs to be refocused towards early intervention and prevention and away from its current assumptions.
- The statute needs to be consolidated in two directions: public bodies should be given more powers and fewer duties; and the citizens of Scotland should be given a clearer description of their rights, entitlements and responsibilities.

Contribution, expertise and success of social work

ADSW is concerned that in any restructuring of public services in Scotland the important contribution of social work is not lost.

We know that social work services are valued by people who use them: the Social Work Inspection Agency has reported that 89% of older people believe the services they receive are of good quality and 85% say they have helped them lead a more independent life.

We know social work can and has supported vulnerable people through massive change, improving outcomes for them as a result. 'Community Care' is 20 years old this year. Social work has successfully led the implementation of care in the community, which has seen thousands of vulnerable people resettled in our communities, following hospital resettlement policies.

We know that social work contributes something to the outcomes and lives of vulnerable people that no other service does. The 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act came into being as a direct result of the recognition that the unique, holistic approach offered by social work required to be strengthened. Social work's contribution to the lives of people in Scotland stems from a different value base than some other public services, including the health service. Social work treats people holistically, addressing all their needs. Recent research on the contribution and success of social work interventions in assisting people with substance misuse problems points to this (see report on ADSW's website www.adsw.org.uk published on 18 March 2011).

Social work is also best placed to support vulnerable people through change. Community empowerment, personalisation and co-production rely on other community based services, such as housing, employment and education to implement them successfully; social work is located and shares a value base with these services within local government.

Issues to consider

Public sector reform and the future delivery of public services should take into account the following:

1. We need to be truly focused on outcomes and the experience of the individual and his/her need for services, which are relevant, effective and offer best value. We should begin from this premise, and consider which models may support this, rather than starting from the premise that structural change of itself is the answer.
2. ADSW strongly supports the establishment of national standards for social care (not exclusively for adults), which would address the issue of variation across Scotland and would be a clear 'charter' establishing what citizens can expect of state funded care support.
3. ADSW would also welcome a delivery mechanism for social care that ensures joint and equal accountability for shared performance targets between the key agencies responsible for delivering social work services.
4. Our communities value local democracy. Whatever shape the reform of public services takes, ADSW believes that it must not weaken local decision-making by breaking the link between local tax raising powers and decisions regarding service levels and priorities.
5. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 acknowledges that local authorities may have different views regarding the type of activity that will promote or improve the well-being of their area and the factors that constitute that well-being. The guidance makes clear that plans, priorities and action taken under the legislation should be informed by, and responsive to, the

views of the people and communities in the area.¹ There is an obvious and purposeful relationship between social work and the other services of the local council in advancing wellbeing. In siting older people's social care within health there is a real danger of recreating boundaries between social care and other critical services that support people in their own homes and communities and prevent inappropriate hospital admissions and ultimately institutionalisation, e.g. culture, recreation and leisure, housing, education, employment, etc. In addition, this arrangement would do nothing to address the current gulf between the acute and primary care sectors, which are both within a single agency.

Conclusion

We hope the commission find this submission helpful and would be pleased to provide further information and evidence if required. ADSW would also be keen to participate in further discussions regarding the possible mechanism for delivering our shared objectives of **improved outcomes** and **consistent standards** through a **joint accountability framework** that is owned in equal measure by the key public service delivery bodies.

Michelle Miller

President

ADSW

31st March 2011

¹ Guidance on the Power to Advance Wellbeing
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/04/19276/36158#b15>