

Challenging Systems, Changing Lives

a manifesto
2011 - 2015



Preface

As we write this in the winter of 2010, Scotland is facing a significant reduction in available resources for public services. With some protection offered to the NHS and clear expectations on local authorities in relation to performance and a Council tax freeze, social work and social care face an unprecedented challenge. Furthermore, the anticipated timescale of the spending reductions of between four and ten years means that our society's whole system for meeting need and promoting social justice will have to be transformed. However efficient and lean public service organisations may become, the ratio of current and projected demand to volume of resources available is such that transformational change is required. However, change is required not only for financial reasons, but because people want and expect choice over the type of support they access; they want flexibility, independence and control. Our systems and services need to reflect these aspirations.

The Association of Directors of Social Work will provide professional leadership through this change and will offer Scotland a positive narrative for the future of our work. To do that we will have to challenge long-held ideas and models of service delivery.

Our manifesto: **Challenging systems, Changing lives** will support this change, but if you are reading this, you too will need to start thinking how you can support this change. How do we reduce costs, bureaucracy and duplication? How do we improve the experiences and circumstances of our citizens who need additional support, care and protection? How do we begin the process of transformation – from providing traditional services to enabling and facilitating the development of care and support over which people can exercise choice and control?

If Self Directed Support legislation is passed with the presumption that this will be the norm, it would be possible to deliver an entirely new contract with people who need our assistance; a contract that empowers them to make choices and allows our focus to centre on enablement, protection and continuous improvement.

We know that this will not happen overnight and may meet with some resistance, but the Association recognises a duty to lead, to secure resources and to fulfil the statutory obligations of local authorities: *“to promote social welfare by making available advice, guidance and assistance on such a scale as may be appropriate for their area...”* [Section 12 Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968]

December 2010

Introduction

The Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) is the professional association representing senior social work managers in local government in Scotland. This manifesto explains our priorities and commitments for the next four years.

Approximately 650,000 people and their families are supported by social care services in Scotland. These services are provided by a workforce of 198,000, made up of staff from local authorities, the NHS and other private and voluntary organisations. This includes a very wide range of jobs, from social workers to occupational therapists and home care workers.

Scottish local authorities employ some 53,000 social workers and social care staff.

At the heart of all social work lies a commitment.

A commitment to:

- support people who are most vulnerable and most at risk of social exclusion
- encourage people to make positive changes in their lives, achieve their potential and become active citizens
- assist people to live fulfilled and independent lives; and
- keep people safe from harm or from harming others

Priorities

ADSW recognises the difficult financial challenges of the recent economic downturn. This has particular implications for social work as, historically, recessions tend to have more of an effect on the people with the least resources.

Taking the current climate into consideration, this manifesto outlines our priorities based around the following 12 themes:

- 1 Financial pressures
- 2 Leadership
- 3 The image of social work
- 4 Personalisation
- 5 Early intervention and preventative services
- 6 Children and families
- 7 Community care
- 8 Strategic commissioning
- 9 Shared services
- 10 Supporting the workforce
- 11 Criminal justice
- 12 Substance misuse

1 Financial pressures

Like all public services, social work is under a great deal of pressure from budget cuts. While it will not be possible to provide the same level of service in the current economic climate, these challenging circumstances must be used as an opportunity to transform the way we work. Otherwise, helping the increasing numbers of the most vulnerable people in our communities will not be possible.

ADSW will:

- promote ways in which different services can share resources or be brought together, and encourage agencies and the government to introduce radical new ways of providing care for more people
- encourage a wider public debate about public services – looking at engaging communities and individuals on issues such as priorities, standards and costs
- work with our membership, with COSLA, the Scottish Government, the NHS and other partner agencies and professional associations to secure enough funding for social work and social care into the future
- negotiate the amount of ‘protected health funding’ the Scottish Government gives to local authorities and the voluntary sector. The amount should recognise the essential contribution social work and social care makes to an effective NHS – by reducing the social effects of ill health and by tackling health inequalities

2 Leadership

Strong leadership is key to the delivery of high quality, responsive services.

ADSW will:

- continue to promote and participate in leadership development opportunities for social work and social care managers
- continue to seek to influence policy making and resource allocation and to promote the sharing of good practice across Scotland
- support and develop leadership skills throughout the workforce to ensure the future of social work is in good hands

3 The image of social work

Social work is a difficult subject for the media to report. The confidential nature of much of the work and the fact that it touches the lives of a minority of the population pose particular challenges.

ADSW aims to help promote a positive and realistic profile of social work and social care. If the public has a better understanding of what our staff do, they will have more trust and confidence in them. Negative images have the opposite effect.

ADSW will:

- help to raise the profile of social work with the press, the public and politicians, working to ensure that a realistic and more positive image of social work prevails
- explain and celebrate our work and increase public understanding of the role

4 Personalisation

Personalisation is about making services more individual – allowing people to have more choice and control over their care, which in turn allows them to live a better quality of life.

This is a fundamental change from the traditional way of matching individuals with existing social care services. It is a cultural shift and means the social work profession must adopt a new ‘compact’ – a set of shared principles and guidelines – with the people who need support, both now and in the future.

ADSW is well placed and prepared to help lead that change – assisting the work on self directed support and direct payments – with the Government, health services, the independent sector, individuals, their carers and their communities.

ADSW will:

- shift the focus from defining ‘personalisation’ and seeking consensus on the need for change, to working with local authorities, health services and independent sector providers to promote real change in the way that services are delivered and received
- support the idea that ‘self directed support’ can mean many things to many people, allowing individuals to take more control over their care, their independence and ultimately, their lives

5 Early intervention and preventative services

In the current economic climate, one of the biggest challenges facing local authorities and their partners is how to continue to provide high quality services to the people most in need, many of whom are at crisis point, while continuing to maintain and develop preventative and early intervention services.

Maintaining these preventative services is particularly important, as research shows that they reduce the pressure on other social work services further down the line.

ADSW will:

- highlight and support innovative practice that strengthens communities, promotes personal development, contributes to independence and reduces the need for 'higher tariff' services at later stages
- seek to protect effective early intervention as a critical service area

6 Children and families

Social work can play many important roles in supporting children and their families. Some of these roles are welcomed and supported. Others are contentious and challenging.

Child protection is never far from the headlines, nor from the minds of politicians and the public, mainly through the tragic incidents of child abuse, neglect or death.

Although the number of children and young people in Scotland is falling overall, demand from our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people is growing. More and more children and young people are living with parents who misuse alcohol and/or drugs. We need to be able to support them and keep them safe.

ADSW will:

- promote the Scottish Government's Getting It Right for Every Child policy, not as a separate programme or service, but rather as an ethos that serves as the basis for how all children's services are delivered
- support the Scottish Government's Early Years Framework for its positive impact on children's longer term development and life chances
- lobby strongly for the reshaping of universal services to deliver the framework for all children, allowing social work to focus on providing targeted additional support, protection and therapeutic interventions
- work to ensure that services for children who are looked-after-at-home or looked-after-away-from-home reflect their care, support and developmental needs
- promote good 'corporate parenting' to ensure that all partner agencies with a responsibility for looked-after children prioritise their health, education, employment and housing needs

7 Community care

Community care and the support and protection of adults and older people in our communities is one of the biggest areas in social work. Current pressures will increase as people live longer and need more support.

We have seen significant developments in community care in the last 20 years, but more change is needed if we are to realise the vision of truly personalised services for all those who need additional support.

ADSW will:

- work actively with COSLA, the Scottish Government, NHS, independent sector providers and service users and carers to reshape older people's care to reflect the needs, wishes and aspirations of older people, as well as looking at resource availability and our shared vision of community life
- work to ensure that services for adults at risk of social exclusion (including adults with learning disabilities) promote independence, integration and choice, and provide protection that is right for the person's needs and circumstances
- work with COSLA and the Scottish Government in the development of the carers' strategy to ensure that carers get the support they need

8 Strategic commissioning

Local authorities play a key role in planning and delivering care services, but they are not the only organisations that provide them.

Scotland has a 'mixed economy of care' with many other private and voluntary organisations providing these services, some of which local authorities buy on behalf of individuals who need them. This offers a richness of choice to individuals and their carers; but it also means that local authorities have to make sure that the services they are purchasing offer value for money, while also being of the highest quality.

ADSW will:

- work closely with local authorities and voluntary and private providers, the Care Commission and inspection bodies to improve the ways these services are commissioned

9 Shared services

Because of the current economic climate, every effort should be made to make savings, minimising overheads and infrastructure costs.

Sharing services between local authorities and/or providing them jointly with partner agencies such as the NHS, can be a good way making limited budgets go further.

Sharing services also means the kind of care offered by different agencies can be of a similar quality with greater equality of access for people across the board.

ADSW will:

- help to deliver social work services that get the best out of the 'social work pound'
- promote and develop ways in which other services (for example, the NHS) and social work can work together more effectively
- promote this kind of joint working as a partnership of equals

10 Supporting the workforce

People who need our services rely on a professionally trained and skilled workforce. However, with tighter budgets and more demand on services, we must make sure that staff continue to get the right training and support, particularly if we are going to meet the challenge of introducing major policy changes, like personalisation.

The social work and social care workforce is diverse. As well as social workers and social care staff, it includes nurses, occupational therapists, home carers, youth workers, foster carers, criminal justice supervisors, counsellors and many more.

ADSW will:

- work with the Scottish Social Services Council, the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care, universities, colleges and others to ensure we have a well qualified, flexible and committed workforce, able to deal with the changing nature of social work
- continue to identify and support staff who have the long-term potential to take leadership roles
- encourage and promote 'evidence informed' practice – for example, decision-making that is influenced by professional experience
- continue to ensure that front line staff can make their voice heard through Local Practitioner Forums

11 Criminal justice

During 2011, putting the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act into practice will be the main area of activity in criminal justice social work. The Act represents a huge policy shift in the way we view the criminal justice system and the way in which we aim to rehabilitate offenders.

Community-based alternatives to prison, that have the right amount of support and risk management are key to reducing re-offending. They also help generate public confidence in the justice system. ADSW supports the intention to increase the proportion of offenders serving community based sentences and to reduce the prison population.

ADSW will:

- support local authority criminal justice services in dealing with the impact of the increase in community sentences and the demands of the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act
- encourage better integration of the Community Justice Authorities' functions into local Community Planning arrangements
- support the development of a personalised approach to the rehabilitation of offenders

12 Substance misuse

Alcohol and drugs can have a long-term and far-reaching negative impact on our communities. To tackle the problem, all of the agencies involved need to work together towards common goals.

ADSW will:

- work to put into practice the key recommendations in the Scottish Government strategy documents 'The Road to Recovery' and 'Changing Scotland's Relationship with Alcohol'
- focus on helping children whose lives have been affected by their parents' substance misuse
- work with the Scottish Government to communicate the findings of our jointly commissioned study, which looks at how effective social work and social care services are in working with people who misuse alcohol and drugs; we will use the research findings to promote better ways of working

Conclusion

These are challenging times. But they also offer a real opportunity to make a once-in-a-generation shift in the way we think about our purpose and our services.

This is an ambitious manifesto, which will need a longer timeframe than a single presidency to realise all its goals.

Over the four-year life of this manifesto, we will work with all our partner agencies to make these goals a reality – to protect; to tackle poverty and inequality; and to build social inclusion by giving all children and adults equal access to universal services.

