

FIFTY

1968-2018

YEARS

# Celebrating 50 Years of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

Wednesday 05 December, Edinburgh

@socworkscot

#1968SWS

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# Welcome

**Jackie Irvine**

President, Social Work Scotland

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# Opening Address

**Maree Todd**

**Minister for Children and Young  
People**

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# Keynote

Prof. Brigid Daniel &  
Jane Scott

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# The Social Work (Scotland) Act – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Project

**Brigid Daniel**

Dean of the School of Arts,  
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Edinburgh

**Jane Scott**

Independent Researcher

## Acknowledgement – a huge thanks to:

- Social Work Scotland for conceiving, funding and supporting the project.
- The Consultative Expert Panel whose reflections in the interviews and guidance on materials were invaluable.
- The Advisory Group to the project who provided wise counsel on the significant issues.

# Methodology

- Literature review
  - Peer-reviewed material (and a thesis) published in the last ten years,
  - 1,250 screened to -> 102 filtered to -> 53 in-depth review -> 36 plus 7 added by expert panel -> total of **43**.
- Interviews with 11 people on the Expert Consultative Panel on:
  - The intentions and whether realised
  - Continuities, discontinuities, challenges and
  - What were the key challenges/developments?

And....

- What would this Act look like?

## **The Social Work (Scotland) Act 2018**

- *And would it even be conceivable?*

# Themes emerged related to the key components of the Act

1. The time: **1968** -> 2018
2. The place: **Scotland** then -> Scotland now
3. The field: **Social work** -> integrated services

**The TIME – 1968 : 2018**

The stars aligned

*The 1960s was an era of fundamental change for UK social work. What began the decade as a number of separate services, created in piecemeal fashion to meet the increasingly specialized demands of the expanding welfare state, would end it as a unified profession. This was the vision of social work reformers across the UK—a ‘generic’ profession which recognized the interconnected and complex nature of social problems and, crucially, the underlying similarity of core skills that all those working within the personal social services should possess. However, for social work reformers in Scotland, the ‘vision’ was broader. Here, the vision would extend beyond organizational restructuring into something more significant: **the belief that social work could be a positive and radical force for social change.***

(Brodie, Nottingham and Plunkett 2006, p699)

# Two themes

Deserving and undeserving poor



**Social Justice**



Optimism and social sciences

# Deserving and undeserving poor

*Although the deterrent effect of the Poor Law was gradually diminishing as the incidence of outdoor relief increased and a more sympathetic understanding of the causes of unemployment developed, there nevertheless remained a marked- antipathy to the 'undeserving' poor, an attitude which had been propagated by the belief that the public relief of destitution demoralised the recipient and made him thriftless and dependent.*

(Campbell 1978, p4)

# Move away from 'undeserving'

*Section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 represented an expansion of the principle of prevention in social work practice to embrace a more active promotional approach to social problems, and also sanctioned a much broader and more generous application of cash assistance to all kinds of individuals and for all types of difficulties.*

(Campbell, 1978)

# Optimism and the social sciences

*The late 1960s was a moment when there was recognition of widespread social problems, but also, in marked contrast to later times, **a confidence that they could be addressed**. Moreover, there was a prevailing assumption, reflected within Harold Wilson's Labour administration, that it was in the newly fashionable social sciences and a reformed and **re-energized public sector** that solutions could be found.*

(Brodie et al, 2008, p701)

*Here, the description of social enquiry and of the significance of quasi-diagnostic reports again reflects the 'scientific' discourse of offender-oriented treatment ... presaging the Streatfeild [sic] Report's (1961) **high tide of optimism** about the supposed potential of social science in informing a more effective and rational approach to sentencing.*

(McNeill, 2005, p30)

*Above all, the process in Scotland was driven by a government minister (Judith Hart) and leaders of the social work profession who worked together on the basis of **shared values**.*

(Bilton 2008, p10)

*Social Work and the Community (Scottish Office, 1966) laid down the vision that Scottish social work should effect significant change. Underlying this was an assumption that the key to change was '**not just getting rid of poverty but establishing equality**' (ADSW Witness Seminar, 2003).*

(Brodie et al, 2008, p702)

# Inbuilt vulnerability

*... the distinctive vision for social work in Scotland, enshrined in the 1966 White Paper and 1968 Act, assumed that a community-based and a traditional leftist approach would fit within the political mainstream. Scottish social work as developed in the 1960s particularly was vulnerable to changes in the political climate.*

(Brodie et al 2006, p704)

# Shifting ideologies

- **Welfarism** – social democratic paternalism
- **Professionalism** - the ideology stressing the expertise and authority of the professional
- **Consumerism**, focusing on the power of the service user as a consumer
- **Managerialism**, privileging managerialist and economic concerns
- **Participationism**, stressing a more equal partnership between service provider and service user.

(Evers, 2003, cited in Asquith et al, 2005)

# The future – NQSW in Scotland

- Major influence for choosing social work
  1. Supporting service users 57%
  2. Empowering people 55%
  3. Social Justice 50%
- Whether can demonstrate professional value of 'Promote equal opportunities and social justice'
  1. Always or Often 85%

(Grant et al, 2017, p16)

# The PLACE - Scotland then : Scotland now

## The difference



Girls jumping on planks  
Scotland <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/128309/eye-street-glasgow-1968-girls-jumping-planks>



David Peat, An Eye on the Street, Glasgow 1968  
© The Peat Family  
National Galleries of Scotland

Girl and two boys with burning stick  
<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/128339/eye-street-glasgow-1968-girl-and-two-boys-burning-stick>

*Social work in Scotland has been so dynamic in its structures, so sensitive to shifts in social and political ideology, so wide-ranging in its responsibilities, and, more recently, so controversial in terms of its public role that any short account must be highly selective. A recurring theme will be the Scottish dimension itself, for social work here always was, and remains, significantly different from social work elsewhere in the UK.*

(Brodie, Nottingham and Plunkett 2006, p698)

# Distinctive legal system

*Scotland's criminal justice system has long been recognised for its distinctive nature, traditions and practices ... Typically, commentators draw attention to two fundamental features. The first relates to the common law nature of Scots criminal law - a term used to refer to a body of law developed through successive decisions of courts and similar tribunals, rather than through legislative statute. The second feature relates to the pivotal and discretionary role played by prosecutors (or procurators fiscal) and judges in the criminal justice process ... most agree that each brings a level of flexibility and discretion to Scottish justice which sets it apart from the judicial practices of many other jurisdictions.*

(McCulloch and McNeill, 2010, p22)

*Scotland 'stole a march' on England and Wales and achieved more revolutionary change with less turmoil*

(Younghusband, 1978, p. 250.)

*...the SNP government has outlined an equally progressive approach to public service reform, centred on principles of participation, prevention, partnership and performance, as detailed in the Christie Commission report...Though most observe that government ambitions are yet to be fully realised across these areas, the shift towards a more progressive and participatory politics in Scotland, driven in part by a broader politics of national autonomy and nation building, has made for a more collaborative approach to social service development and reform in Scotland.*

*(McCollough and Taylor, 2018, p3)*

*Certainly, the holistic element inherent in GIRFEC can be traced back to the whole-child approach of the Kilbrandon Report, which recommended bringing agencies together to assess the needs of the child and his or her personal and family circumstances.*

*(Coles et al, 2016, p340)*

# The FIELD – Social Work : Integrated Services



Belief in the Profession

*Prior to this Act social work had been practised under the auspices of three different organisations—probation, health and welfare, and childcare—as well as a plethora of voluntary organisations. The 1968 Act brought the statutory agencies together into **generic social work departments**, with a view to dealing more effectively with the full range of people’s social problems from within one agency.*

(Watson, 2008, p319)

# Importance of generic social work education

*...findings from recent review activity across the UK suggest that there is little to be gained and much to be lost by hasty investment in untested models of learning that threaten to distance and divide professional communities that need to unite...*

(McCollough and Taylor, 2018, p3)

# Integration of services

The key message of this work is that integrated working is most likely to succeed when it is focused on the common outcome that it is intended to achieve. Process is essential, but without a clear and sustained focus on the long-term gains for users and carers there is little likelihood that the complexities of integrated working will be overcome sufficiently to produce the intended benefits.

(Stewart *et al*, 2003, p.349)

# The future looks promising -

- NQSWs 'working with other professionals and agencies':
  - 64% confident,
  - 30% somewhat confident

*'the project team were left with the impression of a workforce who appeared – on the face of it - confident and able to engage in complex work at this stage in their career'*

(Grant et al, 2017, p28)

# Findings from the Interviews

**CONVERSATIONS**



# What was the Act trying to do?

Captured optimism



# Optimism

*The late 1960s was a moment when there was recognition of widespread social problems, but also, in marked contrast to later times, a confidence that they could be addressed. Moreover, there was a prevailing assumption, reflected within Harold Wilson's Labour administration, that it was in the newly fashionable social sciences and a reformed and re-energized public sector that solutions could be found.*

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# What was the Act trying to do?

Captured optimism



Principles and values

Profession



Protecting

# What did respondents say about the Act?

*More than welfare – about empowerment, direct assistance and for society to take responsibility for most vulnerable.*

*Welfare was at its heart and promoting welfare ... It was optimistic, about equity and equality, and preventative – your outcome was not prescribed by birth. A genuine view about all achieving their potential... Captured some of the optimism of the time ... it being the state's responsibility to deliver services through a responsibility for social justice. If the welfare state was about a safety net then the 1968 Act was a springboard for people to achieve their potential – and about the whole person.*

*Intervene rather than just pick up the pieces and Section 12 gave the freedom to use resources to help, especially debts and a license to talk about money.*

*Recognition of impoverished communities and strong focus on social justice.*

*The 1968 Act saw crime in social context and social inequalities were recognised as profoundly important such as structural inequalities and the need for individuals to work within the context of social, environmental and relationships that really matter ... Philosophy of Kilbrandon into adult criminal justice was probably a positive unforeseen consequence – that was quite radical.*

*...the holy grail or bible for social workers, a set of guiding principles particularly around issues of social justice.*

*(Interviewees)*

# Did the Act realise its intentions?

Principles and values

Practice

Profession

# What has challenged the Act?



# How things change

*... the distinctive vision for social work in Scotland, enshrined in the 1966 White Paper and 1968 Act, assumed that a community-based and a traditional leftist approach would fit within the political mainstream. Scottish social work as developed in the 1960s particularly was vulnerable to changes in the political climate.*

(Brodie et al 2006, p704)

*Thatcher years and New Labour, and the split between public/provider suppliers. No longer a community response – coinciding with a demise of the welfare state. Back to a greater focus on deserving poor and aspects of eligibility criteria made things more prescribed.*

(Interviewee)

# What has challenged the Act?



*the increasing challenge to the hearings system through the involvement of legal representation and legal appeals by parents in relation to decision-making, particularly around permanency decisions which are almost to the detriment of the child. Children, themselves, are rarely legally represented*

(Interviewee)

# What has challenged the Act?



# Challenges moving forward?



# Range of views

*Perhaps we can't be generic as each discipline is now littered with a range of policy and legislation... but all workers need to see individuals within systems*

*Intentions of the Act have remained in areas where the professional discipline has remained strong and particularly the principle of working **with** people and social change not social control. Need to keep at forefront the principles of social work as workers, managers and leaders. In this way, not too worried about the move into specialism as core principles the same and importance and value of social work supervision retained.*

*Promotion of social justice and values still in place in the profession, but not shared across other professions ... a voice muffled by universal services...*

(Interviewees)

## Optimism re-visited...

*Feel that the social work profession is here to stay and foundations in place, but we need to re-visit our authority.*

*Social work has the ability to re-define itself which means that it can look forward.*

(Interviewees)

# Social Work (Scotland) Act 2018

The 2018 Act keeps Social Work in the title, protects a generic profession working in statutory and voluntary sectors supporting people from cradle to grave. It is rights and values based and addresses the root causes of inequality with an emphasis on social justice rather than social welfare. It enshrines human rights, equalities and the compassion that anyone would want for themselves and their family. It includes principles of prevention, redistribution, representation and recognition. It will be bottom-up legislation, with a focus on people, networks, compassionate and integrated communities and professionals as facilitators in the service of people rather than doing services to them.

(cont)

It supports social work skills including empowering people to find solutions, advocacy and avoidance of blame for lifestyle and choices. It reinvigorates the role and authority of social work in the integrated landscape and builds on social work's expertise in collaborative working with families, communities and other professions. It facilitates integration of social work services with those of education, health and justice to ensure a rounded and personalised service. Leadership within social work and within the integrated professional landscape is supported by suitable powers and status.

ACT



***Re-engage the optimism and do not leave anyone behind.***

(Interviewee)

# Workshops (10:40 – 11:30)

- A) Criminal Justice Social Work - AUDITORIUM
- B) Prevention or Crisis Response? – SKYE (upstairs)
- C) What is youth justice? – ISLA (upstairs)
- D) Community: A radical current? - LEWIS (downstairs)
- E) From welfare to wellbeing? - HALL
- F) Changes in social work adoption practice - AUDITORIUM



# Comfort Break

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# Workshops (11:45 – 12:30)

- A) Criminal Justice Social Work - AUDITORIUM
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# Panel Discussion

Jackie Irvine

Fiona Duncan

Sandy Cameron

Jane Kellock

Brigid Daniels

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**Rights**

**Relationships**

**Recognition**

**Social Work Scotland  
Annual Conference  
& Exhibition 2019**

**12-13 June 2019  
Crieff Hydro Hotel**

To note interest or submit  
a workshop proposal:  
<https://book.shsc.scot/sws>

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