



The future of social work and social work learning: A visioning project from Lancaster University's Department of Applied Social Science

Blackburn Practitioner workshop: 21st February: Bootstrap Enterprises.

Twelve social work practitioners took part in this half day workshop during which they explored the following questions:

1. What is the meaningful contribution that social work can make to citizens in the future?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges affecting social work today?
3. What do you need in order to make such a contribution and to develop your career?

The following pages are a summary of the information gathered in answer to these key questions.

Participants:

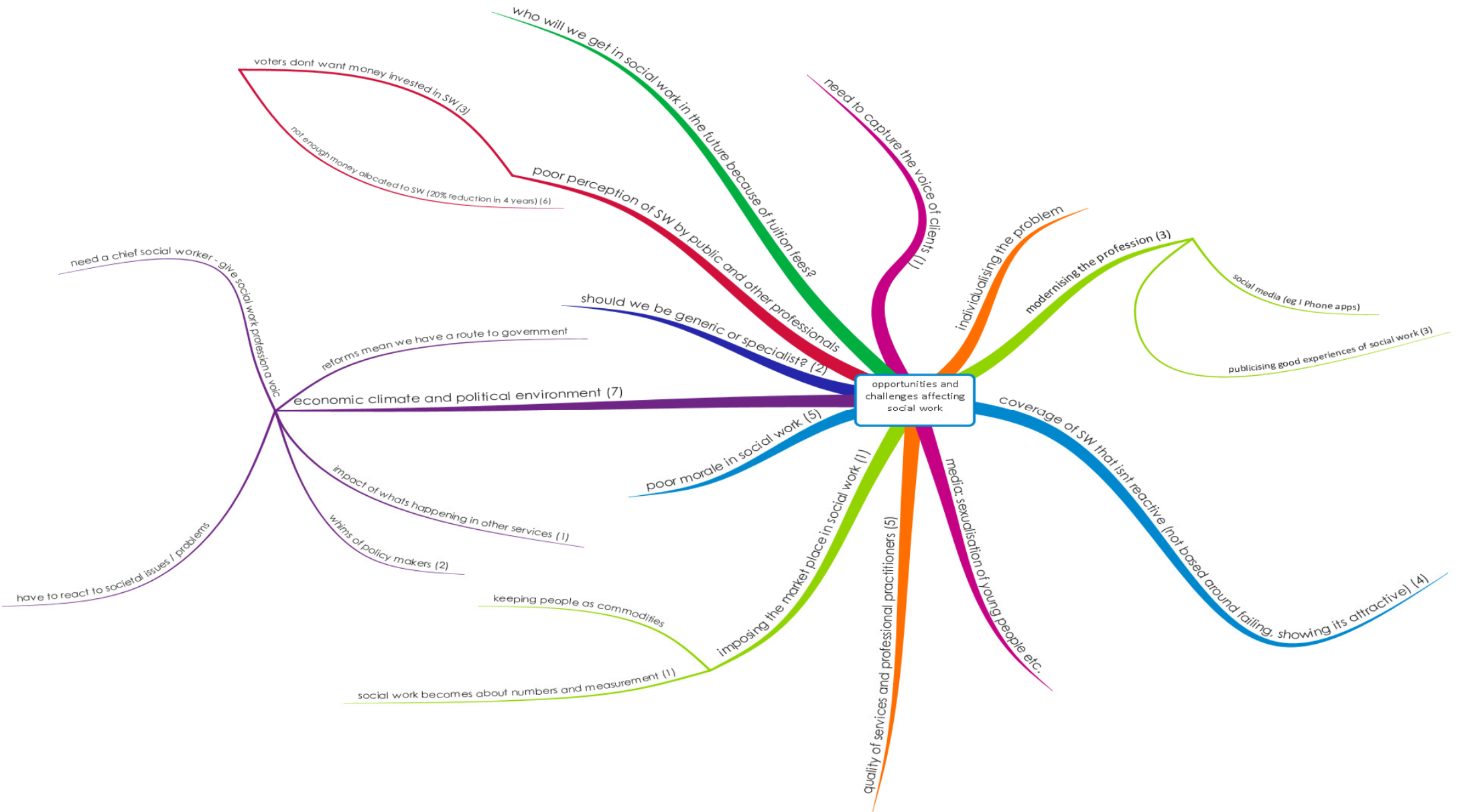
Blackburn with Darwen Childrens Services (4),
Blackburn with Darwen Youth Offending Team (2)
LCC Childrens Services (3)
LCC Adult Services (1)
Voluntary sector service providers (2).

What is the meaningful contribution that social work can make to citizens in the future?

1. (Re)-empower and skill-up universal services to work with all citizens (education, health, community and voluntary sector)
2. To provide the support citizens need to get over life's hurdles, should be a profession people seek out, not avoid
3. Shape policy so that Government sees people with problems not 'as problems'
4. A profession that has a solid knowledge base and the skills to enable citizens to achieve positive change in their lives and promotes this philosophy
5. Provides a consistent reliable and dependable response to people in need of support
6. A response underpinned by core social work values; (challenging oppression, valuing individuality and diversity, a core respect for the individual and individual choice, an understanding of power)
7. The ability to assess holistically and recognise the connections between people's problems and society
8. A sociological understanding of peoples problems and needs
9. The skill to form positive working relationships
10. The ability to re-engage the disengaged and hard to reach within communities
11. To provide a helping hand to people along their journey – at all stages through the life course
12. Provide a proactive service shaped by community need not just reactive
13. Positive interventions underpinned by professional knowledge that allows people to make changes for themselves
14. Interventions that build citizen's capacity
15. Safeguarding the interest of the most vulnerable in society by understanding the causes
16. The ability and skill to build empathetic relationships
17. A clearly understood common contribution based upon its philosophical principles; its value base and informed by theoretical knowledge. A contribution which should be seen throughout life stages and across services.



What are the opportunities and challenges affecting social work today?¹



¹ Participants were invited to identify the issues they feel most needs addressing in the future. The number of voters each issue received is the bracketed figure at the end of the line.

What do you need in order to make such a contribution (i.e. the vision identified in Activity 1) and to develop your career?

What do you need in order to make such a contribution and develop your career	How could the university work in partnership with you and others to support your contribution?
Linking theory to practice	Link MA dissertation students with organisations research needs
	Send us links to information regarding research relevant to our service – involve us in research
	Provide on the job training to social workers – come to us rather than us to you.....link with Advanced Practitioners role to make it relevant to the service
	Provide a best practice / up to date / case study website?
We need the ‘Jamie Oliver’ of social work, a high profile champion that people can identify with	TV/Soap documentary
People feeling valued – moving away from blame and instead learning	
A framework to operate within that reflects the nature of our work	
Time to reflect – what you do and why you do it (we spend all our time doing)	
Supervision – not just case management but also reflection	
Structure of services – is flexible enough to meet individual needs	

Job security	
Voluntary sector needs to be seen as important as statutory services	Provide general information and resources for voluntary sector to refer to. Opportunities to bring vol sector and stat sector together for training/discussion
Value contribution of SW in a multi discipline team and vice versa	
Need links to education – educated children at an early age what social work is	Links with schools age 13 and 14 careers choices, careers fair
Change placement structure (not reliant on one assessor) ongoing training during placements.	
Training / Learning opportunities for managers (i.e. new theories not just generic 'management' training	Training for practitioners / organisations e.g. 1 day training on specialist areas.
	Including managers more in practitioner training
Training CPD so theory is always there	Universities could provide 'visiting speakers' to expand on latest research Provide /facilitate more opportunities to reflect
	Links to social work registration currently only have to prove 15 day training in 3 years, nothing about the quality or point of it.
	Development of discrete modules which develop expertise. CPD agenda- flexibility.
CPD needs to be seen as a life long learning opportunity – keep people enthusiastic	Small bite size interactive learning available on line to all staff.

	CPD that is relevant at all stages of career
Research materials for front line staff and research into opinions of users of SW services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Seminars for disseminating research that are low cost and directed at practitioners rather than for fellow academics
Others	
	Research the service user experience. Research that focuses on the infrastructure for social work (buildings etc)
	Develop websites with knowledge libraries for areas of SW – modest subscription? fresh models and theories of practice.
	Involve us more in teaching the subject so we can make it real for students prior to practice
	Involve practitioners in course delivery
	Students need a clear understanding of what they should expect from 1-1 supervision and how to seek more support if required and feel able to challenge managerial decisions made
	More fluid approach to placements / teaching for students
	Giving students some more research based evidence that is current that they can impact on current practice
	Clear alignment of University with Las and CSC. More secondments between

	organisations, Uni and LA.
	Universities working with organisations to promote a learning culture
	University lecturers becoming critical friends. Attending meetings reviewing practice, running reflective groups
	More proportionate financial share for services that accommodate student placements especially as fees gone up to £9k pa
	Placement students should be required to give an agreed amount of time voluntarily to the agency after completion of placement
	Placement providers to receive free training on mandatory areas e.g. safeguarding, child protection, lone working etc