



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

Lancaster Practitioner workshop: (March 1st 2012)

Seventeen 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:

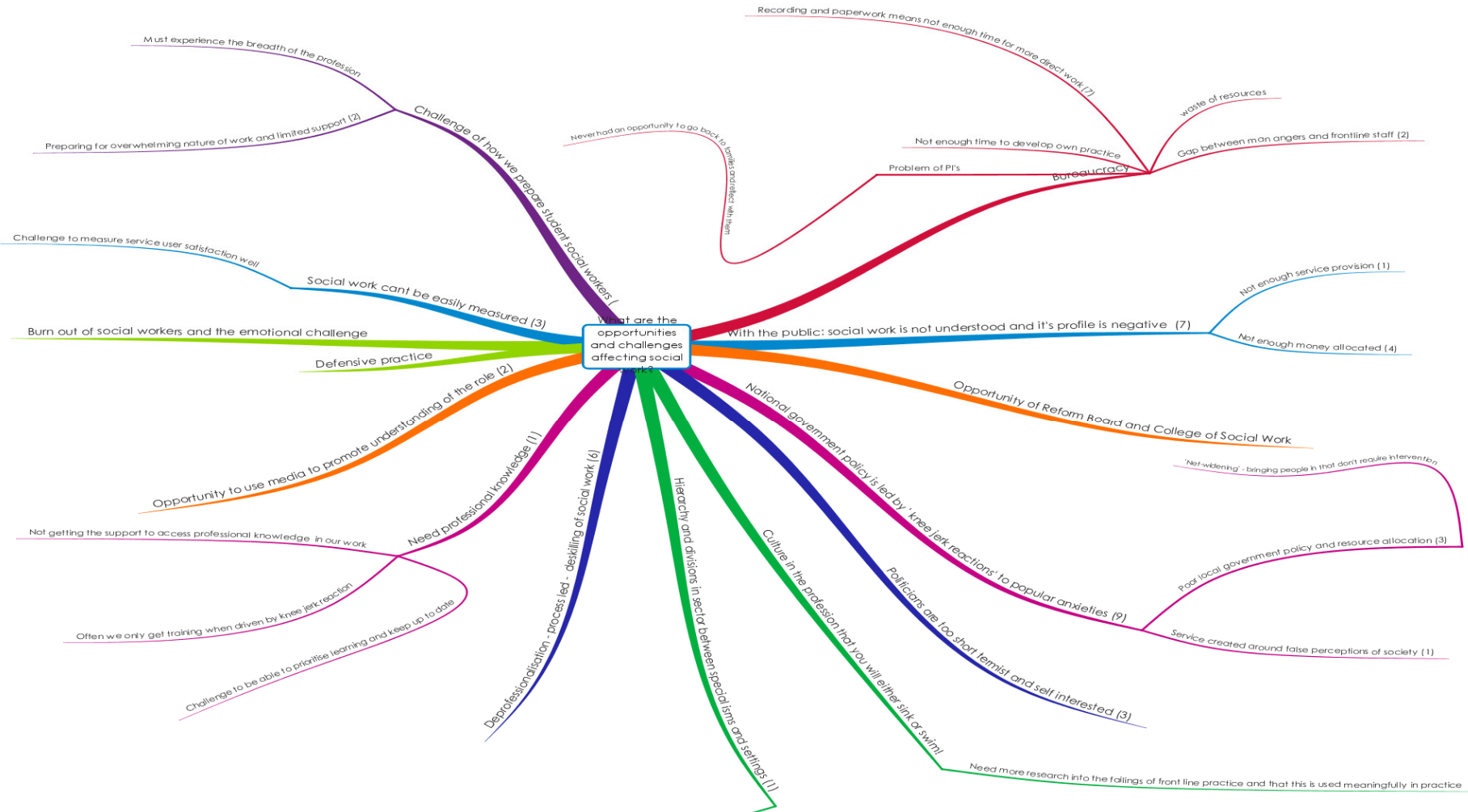
YOT
Adult Social Care (Blackpool)
Childrens Social Care (Blackpool)
Adult Social Care (LCC)
Voluntary sector

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

1. Make changes and improvements to people's lives
2. Enabling people to make their own changes so we work ourselves out of a job – empowering.
3. Community focused as well as focused on the individual so the context is understood
4. Social work in its broadest sense should put resources into early intervention and prevention.
5. Resourcing communities to help them develop solutions themselves and become more resilient.
6. Promoting inclusion and cohesion – understanding the root causes of problems not just how it presents.
7. Protecting the vulnerable – safeguarding
8. Need for social work across the lifespan i.e. the cradle to grave.
9. Clear understanding of the social work role as positive rather than negative.
10. Encouraging and generating and facilitate shared responsibility,
11. Recognise when an intervention should happen
12. Move people's mind-sets
13. Have expertise based on a distinct knowledge base (based on sociological perspective)
14. The use of legal intervention is a last resort.
15. Generating and marshalling resources in a community beyond state provision.



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 other organisations to support you?
More funding for research that contributes to an understanding of social work	<p>Open access to local authorities in order to access up to date research. One login for the authority/area.</p> <p>Promising practice based research – academic articles.</p> <p>Causes that provide practitioners with research opportunities – accredited.</p> <p>Stronger research agenda – seeking funding and combining this with local services.</p>
Ability to analyse critically	Active dialogue with trainer/learning development leads in local services
Need training to develop our academic knowledge (e.g. different options)	<p>Joint delivery of training with LA and uni</p> <p>Provide training and post qualification awards agreed with and funded by employers.</p> <p>Be more transparent in how the course is now run - how does it prepare for practice in the wider sense.</p> <p>Short courses with CPD accreditation that can be combined on academic programmes and open to practitioners dept. Training, bringing in funding, and distributing expertise and doing CPD.</p> <p>To offer further development opportunities.</p>
Recognised knowledge base	<p>National standardised social work courses</p> <p>Make 'real social work' as part of the academic side of the degree.</p>
Social workers need to be seen as experts by others (we do the thinking and analysing)	Ask qualified experienced workers to contribute to student training

	<p>Social workers should be seen as experts in their own right; their decision should be valued and have the same importance as other professionals/experts. Quite often it is the social worker who knows a child/family best!</p>
'Thinking' not just a 'doing' profession	<p>Offer workers more opportunities to be involved in research projects – this will get workers out of the office and thinking!</p> <p>Collaborative work with social work employees Looking at specific research.</p>
Training on the job for those that aren't trained social workers or other opportunities to learn.	<p>Open source materials and events to raise awareness and knowledge of academic research work. Open to local practitioners.</p>
Lecturers should spend part of their year doing clinical practice.	<p>Introduce and/or improve relationships with large employers – offer to visit to lecture.</p> <p>Secondments/role sharing to enable lecturers and social workers to bridge the gap between academia and practice.</p>
Social work academic institution needs to move on. Needs to be more vibrant	<p>Include practitioners in the teaching of social work students – inviting reflective groups and seminars lecturing on specific lectures.</p> <p>Invite social work employers to contribute to course development.</p> <p>Non statutory placement providers to work with academic staff to develop modules on community social work.</p> <p>Representation (within the university body) of practitioner voice.</p>
Role of practice educator needs to be recognised and integral within social work courses.	<p>Ensure students use theory and learning to inform practice</p> <p>More contact from the university to inform practice educators. Forums, chances to share good/best practice. Decrease the isolation of practice educators.</p>

	<p>Closer links with practice teams regarding frontline practice.</p> <p>To be the sole provider of PQ and practice education training, therefore having everyone trained to the same level.</p> <p>Develop stronger links with employers/practice placements (especially non statutory) to offer training/courses to improve understanding of the role of social work in the voluntary sector.</p> <p>To work with existing Practice Educators to retain those without social work qualification even though they are undertaking a social work role and have years of PE experience.</p>
Other ideas	<p>Feedback to participants</p> <p>Offer discounts for postgraduate qualifications</p> <p>Recognise and emphasise the role of the voluntary sector as part of social work both in placements and post qualification.</p>
Time to prioritise the development of your own knowledge.	Offer more post qualifying support
Get rid of crap systems that are organisationally designed.	
Be people driven not process driven	Lobby the decision makers
More time in the field and less time behind the computer so we are more visible	To lobby the powers that is to work towards social workers working more in the field with communities.
Reduce bureaucracy	
Support and supervision from immediate line managers	Offer local authority services training – reflective practice and seminars – newest research.
Managers should have worked in the community/social work – need theory of social work practice.	
Recognise that supervision and case load	

management are different	
Need line managers that understand and have experienced the work	
Need systems that represent what we actually do	
There should be recognised core values for the social work profession	Help to raise the profile of social work and the diversity of skills required.
An improved image through the media	
A recognised profession the public understands and values.	
Think more carefully about how we recruit to the profession it needs to be rigorous so it tests people's motivations	<p>Improved screening/application process for social work courses.</p> <p>Obtain feedback from practice education about the course content and calibre of student</p> <p>Speak to local social work employees about what they think social workers need to work in the field.</p> <p>Ensure rigorous checks for applicants to the social work course.</p>
Good for social workers professional development if they understand different settings	
Pay that attracts good people	
More consultation with frontline workers before policy is made	To hold more sessions with front line workers and feedback into policy.
Social workers who recognise that people are able and can change for themselves.	