

User involvement in social work education

Report of regional consultations with service users to develop a strategy to support the participation of service users in social work education



Shaping Our Lives

Fran Branfield

2007



In social work education, more than in any other area, there are common aims between the individuals providing services, the teaching staff, the service users and the students. We should use these common aims to develop the courses together.

(Service user)

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Summary	4
Introduction	5
A. Barriers to service user involvement in social work education	10
B. Service users' ideas on how to improve service user involvement in social work education	18
Appendix 1 Semi-structured interview to be used in regional consultations	25
Appendix 2 Suggested ground rules for regional meetings	32
Appendix 3 Guidelines for running the consultation event and writing the regional report	33

Acknowledgements

We want to thank Enid Levin from the Social Care Institute for Excellence for her support and help in producing this report. We would particularly like to thank the four local organisations of service users who coordinated, facilitated and/or wrote the regional reports, principally Phil Brough, Audrey Hanion, Andrew Hughes, Munir Lalani, Peter Millington, June Sadd and Michael Turner.

Above all, we would like to thank the service users who took part in the consultation days and who shared their thoughts, experiences and ideas for improving service user involvement in social work education.

Summary

This report provides service users' views on service user involvement in social work education. Published by Shaping our Lives, it is part of a larger initiative, developed by the Social Care Institute for Excellence to develop a strategy to support the participation of service users in social work education.

The report brings together the findings of four regional consultation days that Shaping Our Lives commissioned from four regional service user networks and organisations. The participants were a diverse group of service users in terms of the disabling barriers people experienced, the services they used and their age, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. There is a remarkable degree of consistency and agreement in comments from different service users and service users from different parts of the country.

The report found that service users:

- highly value service user involvement in social work education
- identify common barriers to effective involvement:
 - Academics do not attach high enough value to service users' knowledge.
 - The culture in universities needs to change.
 - Access requirements are not fully met.
 - Service user organisations lack capacity and infrastructure.
 - There is lack of training and support for service user trainers and their organisations.
 - Payment policies, practices and the benefits system discourage involvement.
- Service users can identify ways forward:
 - for universities
 - for government
 - for user-controlled organisations.

Introduction

Shaping Our Lives is a user-controlled organisation working with a broad range of service users including people with physical and/or sensory impairments, users or past users of mental health services, older people, people with learning difficulties, people living with HIV/AIDS, young people and families who have used the care system and people who use or have used palliative care services.

The Department of Health (DoH) has asked the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to work with and support service user organisations so that they can participate equally with all the people involved in social work education.

Shaping Our Lives was asked by SCIE to organise and facilitate four regional consultation days with service users who had an interest in and experience of involvement in social work education. It is important that a diverse range of service users had the opportunity to contribute to this project. A key outcome of this work was to draw up a draft strategy document on service user involvement in the social work degree.

The main focus of this report has to be service user and carer participation in the undergraduate and post graduate social work degree, as specified by the Department of Health. However, the new framework of training social workers after they are qualified requires systematic service user involvement in all its aspects. All the issues raised in this report are relevant to the broader area of training social workers and social care workers throughout their careers.

The people we talked to

During February and March 2005, Shaping Our Lives contacted four regional service user controlled organisations. We gave these organisations an opportunity to use their own networks to identify service users with the necessary interest and experience to tell us what they thought are important issues for the effective involvement of service users in social work education.

We contacted an organisation based in the South West of England, one in the North East, one in the West Midlands and another in the North West. Each consultancy group was made up of a diverse group of service users in terms of the disabling barriers people experienced, the services they used and their age, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

Instead of running one consultation day, one of the organisations chose to run two smaller consultation days as the region is particularly large and it was felt that the amount of travelling involved for some participants would have been prohibitive. One report was produced covering the two consultation days.

It is worth noting that one service user organisation we contacted felt that it was unable to participate. This organisation was located in a rural community and had no experience of involvement in social work education as there were no universities in its region.

Shaping Our Lives, in undertaking this consultation, wanted to include as wide a range of service user perspectives as possible. We consulted with 36 service users: 19 women and 17 men. Of these 36 people, 13 identified themselves as being from a black and ethnic minority community. This group included Asian, African and African Caribbean service users, and service users of mixed parentage. The participants' ages ranged from 18 years to over 70 years. Three people identified themselves as gay or lesbian and one person as bisexual. The overall group included parents and one person with the experience of being a refugee. The participants came from rural, semi-rural and urban locations.

The participants included people with a wide range of physical and/or sensory impairments, people with learning difficulties, users/survivors of mental health services and people with multiple impairments.

The participants in this consultation had a wide and diverse range of experiences of using social care services. This included the use of day services, domiciliary services, residential services and services to support people using direct

payments. It also included people who are in contact with social workers, key workers and/or other support workers.

All participating service users were paid for their time, knowledge and experience in accordance with general principles of good practice for participation. All support, access and travel costs were met.

Participants in the consultation days had had varying degrees of involvement with local universities and the new social work degree. This included involvement in:

- recruitment
- the design of the degree
- delivering training
- membership of a steering group or user forum for the degree course
- teaching as part of Citizens As Trainers
- practice teaching – having social work students on placements in the service user organisation
- evaluation of students.

Shaping Our Lives produced a semi-structured interview schedule to be used during the day (Appendix 1); ground rules for the day (Appendix 2); and guidelines for running the consultation event and writing the report (Appendix 3). Each regional consultation produced a report of the day. Shaping Our Lives collated the four reports and produced this single, final report.

Everybody involved in the consultation days was a service user, including the regional facilitators and report writers.

What participants said

It is clear that most people were aware of and happy about the progress made with the participation of service users in social work education in recent years. However, there were several clear areas of strong frustration. These included issues around support and training provided to service users and the lack of appropriate reward for these activities. People were very happy to be provided with the opportunity to sit back and reflect on these issues, a process which itself they feel will help them with training and evaluation. Everyone present put a great deal of careful thought into their responses. [The participants] also put a great deal of effort and concentration into this exercise.

(Service user group facilitator)

The general feeling among the people who took part in these consultation meetings was that it was a positive step to be holding such days.

A general comment about the consultation being lip service, how much notice will they take in developing social work education? The fact we've been asked is good.

We know that our local university has started taking on board some of our [regional user group] input in their social work courses. So it is being done and we have to start somewhere. Some universities are not just paying lip service. More work is needed though, for example [involving] people with learning difficulties, we need to get people comfortable and confident enough to be involved.

I think it is good that we are here, talking about these things, because it is very important that we are heard and universities recognise that we are experts by experience.

Why involve service users in social work education?

Everyone who took part said that the benefits of involving service users in social work education were innumerable. Here are just some of the things people said:

I think it broadens students' perspectives. They learn what it is like to be on the receiving end. They learn that service users are often kept in the dark, that they do not understand the jargon. They can learn from service users from day one.

You need to understand that social workers are agents of social control rather than beneficial intermediaries between users and services, so disabled people getting involved in training have to appreciate what is being trained. You can then point out false assumptions, where things are being based on false perspectives, point out where there is not evidence to support a particular view. I've seen many people entering social work intending to change it [who] end up being changed by it....

The involvement of service users in training has to have an impact. If you learn to drive a car, you are taught by someone who can drive; if you need to speak French, you are taught by someone who speaks French, but at the moment if you need to know about disabled people's lives, you are taught by someone who wrote a book about it.

User involvement will challenge the medical model in social work education. One of the universities brought in a group of people with learning difficulties to do a presentation, just about who they are and what they do, and the people in the class just didn't see people with learning difficulties as people until they saw this. So if you could have that in social work courses it would help them to see people as people and not just as problems.

Social workers just pay lip service to the social model. They know all the words but they haven't got a clue what it really is. Hopefully, with our involvement, they might actually get to know what the social model is, and actually start to work with it. Take it from theory into making it into reality.

A. Barriers to service user involvement in social work education

In the course of all the consultation days the service users all identified similar barriers to successful and meaningful involvement. We will look at each barrier that service users identified and then look at what service users thought would be helpful in moving towards their meaningful and effective involvement in social work education. The following barriers were identified:

- Academics do not attach high enough value to service users' knowledge.
- The culture in universities needs to change.
- Access requirements are not fully met.
- Service user organisations lack capacity and infrastructure.
- Training for service users and their organisations is lacking.
- Payment policies and practices need improving.
- The benefits system discourages involvement.

Academics do not attach high enough value to service users' knowledge

Most participants who had experience of the teaching and training of social workers reported that in the main their topic was 'disability awareness and discrimination in practice'. One person said he was called in 'every now and again', and someone else said:

We go in to talk to the university to raise awareness about people with learning disability [...] It's not a structured arrangement.

We have delivered disability equality training at several universities.

Every now and again they ask us in to do a slot. It is always on disability equality, or 'awareness' as they call it, and it is always at short notice.

Another common theme is expressed by this service user:

If the college has service users involved sometimes it is easy to get involved but only to a certain degree. They seem to think we can do disability but that is just covering that slot, if you want to be involved in all levels from choosing applicants to assessing them it is a different story.

Others reported a more systematic involvement, although it was also reported in three of the four groups that there was a feeling that academics:

... lack confidence in our abilities

... think we can't really teach the students, not like they can

and:

If it's not from a book with long complicated words they think it can't be worth knowing.

The culture in universities needs to change

There was a strong feeling among the participants that universities are unwilling to try new things. Here is what some people said about this:

I've found that professors and lecturers are some of the worst people for living in the past. They have their own theories and they don't want them to be put out of date by new research.

I think some universities are too rigid and this can prevent involvement.

It's easier for them the way it is, they haven't got to wake up, they can just carry on as they are. It shouldn't be up to us to make them change.

Universities just teach people by the book, and sometimes it's a book that was written 60 years ago.

Universities are always teaching behind themselves – they're not up to date with what's happening in the world.

There are many barriers that professional people put up, like being happy with things the way they are. They like to be the experts and if we come in they think we make it look too easy.

People pointed out that if the university did not fully embrace a culture of user involvement, participation and diversity it was easy for academics to continue as they always had with only superficial or tokenistic service user involvement. As these people say:

The government is driving for user involvement, but a lot of it is not real. Some organisations just want to get some new people involved, to give themselves an easy life. They want passive user involvement.

We tend to overlook something I call the co-opted respectable disabled person, individuals who are courted by social services as figureheads to demonstrate 'here is a disabled person involved in decision making'. But many of these people are puppet figures – there for convenience.

Access requirements are not fully met

People said that service users' access requirements were all too often unmet. Service users frequently reported that universities understood access only in terms of flat access for wheelchair users and that other physical barriers, such as heavy fire doors, security entrance systems and inappropriate seating were not seen as barriers. Furthermore, attitudinal barriers and organisational barriers that service users experience on a daily basis were not given any recognition in most of the universities.

Most universities know nothing about making things accessible for service users. They think that because they have installed a lift then they have access covered. Well, they haven't. They rarely even know what sort of things they should be looking at in terms of physical access let alone alternative formats and ways of talking to each other.

Accessibility issues seem to be treated as an afterthought.

Access issues at some academic institutions are a barrier – to get to the building, the bathroom facilities, and the heavy doors.

We have to address the practicalities if we are to be inclusive. But we had to fight just for one room for a student's faith room or a place for people with learning disability to read their notes before lectures. It's so difficult to get practical issues resolved. The universities have to hear it from us, look at me I am a person not a problem.

There are practical issues around access to buildings at the social work faculty, and just its physical location is very difficult to get to using public transport.

The assumption is that we have to go to them, but they could come to us.

Others talked about how service users had internalised negative assumptions about what they could and could not do:

Service users just never thought they could get involved in training like this.

Service users also identified the disablist attitudes of some students and staff as being a prohibitive barrier to their meaningful participation in social work education:

Some service users lack the confidence to believe they can participate. For some people it is a huge mountain to climb. The way people get treated the first time can put them off.

Sometimes the students can be quite rude and don't value what we are telling them.

For another person, it was clearly people's attitude towards his impairment that was a central barrier to his successful involvement:

Another problem I face is people 'going deaf' as I have a speech impairment.

Service user organisations lack capacity and infrastructure

Many service user organisations do not have the capacity or the infrastructure to be effectively and meaningfully involved in the education of social workers. A few participants who had delivered disability equality training at universities did not know that their involvement could be greater, and they felt it should be:

Just not knowing that you can get involved, ignorance.

How do you make the time to keep up to date with all the things you are asked to be involved in?

But the most common barrier that service users identified was that many service user organisations are led by funding rather than their own agenda and priorities. As these people's comments explain:

Our organisation would dearly love to be more involved. But we aren't really set up for that kind of work. We do what we can but most of the funding we have is around direct payments and so we don't have the time to do this kind of work as well.

Our funding is piecemeal to say the least – it is hardly secure and it is all allocated on different small projects so we don't have the resources, human or otherwise, to develop what the degree course calls for. Obviously we would like to be more involved but it really isn't possible as things stand.

There are issues around time frames and how this impacts on the organisation's own structure. If the university wants a placement to take place in a certain time slot, or needs input into a certain course at a certain venue and time, it has to fit into the structure of our organisation.

We need to focus on building capacity. If your group has two users and a volunteer, what will you offer the university? Who has even got the time to contact the university?

Lack of capacity and infrastructure in service user organisations is closely linked to the following barrier, which all participants identified as an important factor in their involvement with social work education.

There is lack of training and support for service user trainers and their organisations

The majority of the service users talked about the need for service user training. As the following people say, if the necessary training opportunities do not exist, involvement can easily become tokenistic:

To be active and valued, it takes training to be on a panel and it is a big responsibility. Involvement can be tokenism, you can be on the panel but do you have a real voice? Are people trained to think about the questions that need to be asked?

There are questions that will decide whether you are there as the token disabled person or there for real participation. What process is there to make sure you have the skills and knowledge? Are you just the talking crip?

Look! They have a user on the panel so they must know what they're talking about! People need to be trained to talk about disability issues whether it's on courses or doing presentations, etc.

Training is important. We need more disabled professionals who are articulate and confident, but we need to overcome having to have the people who just tow the line, it has to be people who have experience on a day-to-day basis, unbiased people. Not disabled professionals who don't want to rock the boat.

Other people said that if they wanted to be treated equally in the education system they needed to have recognised qualifications:

The University of [name of institution] is more classical and it is harder for unqualified teachers to take part.

It's the same in every walk of life. If you have letters after your name, or called 'Doctor' or 'Professor' then you know what you are talking about. If you are a disabled person who lives it day in and day out and probably knows the care system better than all of them all you are seen as is a disabled person. Not a person who can teach [people] things. I think if we had qualifications like them it might make them listen more. I don't know.

I would like to be able to be paid for teaching and to be seen as a professional trainer. I have studied various courses, mainly to get new skills: teaching skills, facilitating. For me getting a practice teaching qualification would be useful.

I would like to become a qualified trainer. I have had a lot of opposition from qualified trainers; we are told we have no experience. I would like to be an awareness trainer and would like to earn a living from it. I have not been able to access a suitable training course, because of disability access issues. There is a suitable accessible course, but it would cost me £1800 which I can not afford.

For others recognised qualifications were not the issue, but gaining experience of training was:

I would like to do more teaching. I think I have enough qualifications. Now I need the opportunities, especially around issues of cultural sensitivity and asylum seekers.

Another group discussed the fact that for a lot of disabled people gaining formal educational qualifications can be difficult:

Equal opportunities issues are a barrier. Also a person's educational background. If a disabled person has not been given the same educational opportunities, for instance they have been to a segregated school or college, there is then an issue of not being on a level playing field.

Another person said:

The skill level of disabled people should be supported. It's scary for the disabled person to turn the tables and start educating the people who are previously the gatekeepers for them. It's contrary to being an oppressed person – we don't want to be associated with the oppressors – are we being traitors to our people?

But everybody agreed that there needs to be funding for training for service user trainers if we want to achieve full and effective service user involvement in social work education.

Payment policies, practices and the benefits system discourage involvement

When asked what they thought were the biggest barriers (if any) to effective user involvement this is what people said:

The benefits system.

The benefits system is the biggest barrier.

There needs to be more recognition of the professional skills of service users – we are the professionals on our lives, ours is the most valuable experience.

They need to pay expenses and access costs.

The minimum requirement is expenses. People say there isn't the budget for that. They don't budget for the implications of bringing someone in, things like providing a taxi.

Funding is it about knowing what they can tap into – they put on courses but don't tap into funding expenses. The funding has to come from the top – the social work hierarchy should give money to the universities to pay for this.

There can be negative effects on welfare benefits for individuals asked to participate in training. There needs to be back up for people in these situations from well-informed advisers – someone with knowledge within the university structure who can advise on wages for a person participating.

The government has some responsibility for making the benefits system more flexible to allow this to happen. How do people get the skills to become employable when the benefit trap doesn't allow people to gain the experiences and skills to allow people to move on? There must be a change in the benefits system – make it more flexible.

I have plenty of time, but I have not thought of ways I could be more involved. I would like more involvement, especially if financial reward was possible.

Being paid is important. But doing an occasional training day is not the same as having a job. There is a real issue here about benefits and employment.

It has been known for some time that there is an urgent need to revisit the benefits system so that service users can get involved, be paid and not be fearful of losing their right to financial support and benefits. The findings of these consultation days reinforce work that has already been carried out by Shaping Our Lives, commissioned by Dr. Stephen Ladyman, the then Minister for Community.

B. Service users' ideas on how to improve service user involvement in social work education

The facilitators reported that service users had many ideas and suggestions on how to improve and take forward the meaningful involvement of service users in social work education. As has already been highlighted, service users really value the involvement of service users in the training of social workers. The facilitators all commented upon the participants' enthusiasm and commitment to their involvement. As one facilitator said:

... The degree of responsibility to the course and students, and the commitment to get it right, that the service users felt, was extremely impressive.

People had clear and well thought out ideas about how their involvement in social work education could be more effective. All the regional consultation groups had long debates on this topic. In general, the issues discussed fell into three camps. We will explore each in turn.

1. What universities could do

- Address issues of equality.
- Address issues of access, in its widest definition.
- Develop stronger links with their local community.
- Employ more service users on their staff.
- Enrol more service user students.
- Train staff and service users.

Participants felt that until the 'disablist and patronising culture of universities' was seriously challenged then there could not be really effective user involvement in social work education. People felt that first steps could be:

compulsory disability equality training for all staff.

One group of participants discussed the need for:

a liaison officer to sort out barriers like the payments, and the same person could make sure there is support to access the venue, book parking spaces, etc.

It was also felt that there needed to be a 'base' at the university for service users and that they should be able to have 'access to the academics institution's computer system, and library services'. This would:

provide the service users with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills for more effective involvement in the courses.

Another group discussed the need for recognition of the professional skills of service users:

We are the professionals on our lives. Ours is the most valuable experience.

All the groups felt that universities cannot expect to engage with service users if they do not pay service users for their expertise, their time and involvement. As this person said:

Universities should provide more funding support for organisations, if they want them to engage. Organisations are struggling with funding anyway, so why not pay them for setting up meetings and doing other pieces of work?

A common thread throughout the consultations is that of access. The service users all understood access to mean physical access, organisational access and attitudinal access. The first thing that many participants felt was needed was that:

All universities should have an access audit, a really detailed one, to highlight the things that need to be altered.

It was also felt that access would improve if there were more service users using the university, both as staff and students:

Universities should be more open, just because you have an impairment they should be open to you as a person, not see you as a series of problems...

If there were just more service users, particularly people with obvious impairments, perhaps those in power would take on board the need to address access. I think they have to by law but they could do more to encourage students and staff who are also using health and social services.

Some service users said that universities should offer training for service users. Not everyone agreed that training was the universities' responsibility.

Some people argued strongly that the training needed to stay in the service users' domain.

It is training about us therefore we must develop it. It just could be delivered by anyone otherwise.

Service users have the responsibility to train themselves. To do what they do well.

Others argued that the universities had a responsibility to their students which 'should include making sure that service users were delivering teaching well' and thus they argued that universities had a responsibility to train service users.

Several people in different groups said that they felt that it was not training that universities should be giving service users, but rather back up and support:

Universities could train service users in important delivery techniques – like presentation, using [an] OHP and stuff, but the content has to be thought out by us.

All the groups discussed the need for universities to be 'going out in the community' and 'reaching service users and their organisations'.

Universities need to do more outreach work to communicate with service users.

They [universities] should be making partnerships with community organisations including service user groups.

Universities should be reaching out to the community and have much more involvement in the community. This would help to involve a wider range of people too.

2. What government could do

- Allocate secure funding to service user organisations.
- Review welfare benefits in relation to service user involvement.
- Close all segregated schools.
- Enforce positive representation of service users in the media.
- Promote social work and social workers in a more positive light.

All the groups of participants agreed that the government could support the effective and meaningful involvement of service users in social work education by funding service user-controlled organisations:

They need to resource it.

Government needs to be providing adequate funding.

They should allocate more funding.

Ongoing support and funding for local networks of user groups that are involved with universities in education [are needed].

We need more core funding as organisations.

Organisations need longer-term funding, instead of having to apply again and again.

Core funding is required to set up and maintain user-led organisations – there has to be quality control but it costs money, it's got to be about getting the basics off the ground and the government should have more of a commitment to the initiatives that run out of funding.

By being involved in professional training or other types of user consultation we are helping the government. So why aren't we being given funding to help us?

A recurring theme raised by participants was the inaccessibility of forms and processes to apply for government funding:

Government bodies need to give assistance to fill in the forms so that service users can be involved. Self-managed groups always say the funding bids are so difficult to fill in – is there a group who would help us to fill in the bids?

When we didn't get the Comic Relief bid I said maybe we filled it in wrong because of having a learning disability, it's a barrier, they don't volunteer the information about helping to fill in the bids.

Many service users called for a review of the benefits system so that it was more flexible and people could be involved, be paid for their involvement and not be in fear of having their benefits stopped.

The government should remove the obstacles for people on benefits regarding taking payments.

Making the benefits system much more flexible so that people can work varying hours and still make it worthwhile – that is what government should be doing.

For many people, claiming benefits and being paid for involvement was difficult

because of the processes involved:

There are too many forms to fill in order for service users, people on welfare benefits especially, to get involved in consultation – the access should be more basic.

Other financial issues were discussed in one group. The facilitator wrote that government should:

Ensure greater consistency in the levels of payments being made at different academic institutions over the country. Service users felt their input was worth more than £5 an hour, and they knew that in other parts of the country service users get £10 an hour. Comparisons were also made with payments for involvement outside of social work education, and this demonstrated the vast range in amounts of payments [that] exists. It was also felt that payments need to reflect the amount of preparation work that has to take place.

Most of the groups spent quite a considerable time discussing the role the government could play in challenging negative cultural assumptions about service users and in particular disabled people. If society had a more positive view of service users and service users were not segregated then, it was argued, social workers would not view service users as alien:

Most people haven't gone through segregated education but many disabled people have. If more children are mainstreamed in the education system then social work students arriving at university will see disabled people as their peers, people they have grown up with. Disability is still an alien concept to people who haven't grown up with disabled children as their school friends. You see Billy as your friend rather than as Billy the disabled person.

Many people agreed with this person who said:

Disabled people aren't seen in the workplace – this is why we need more disabled teachers and social workers.

This person agreed:

I work and when I get my taxi to work the taxi drivers are always asking me things like 'What time do you have to get to your centre?'

In general it was felt that the government should take an active role in the media representation of service users:

The government should enforce more positive representation in the media.

The media... if the present government believes in media campaigns, then disability issues should be addressed as an equality issue within the BBC.

In this way, many argued, user involvement in the education of social workers would be more effective:

I know we have to start somewhere but the mountains are so high and there is such ignorance about disability, old age, mental health users... the government could do a lot to help.

Others also felt that:

The government should have less of a negative view of social working generally

and:

The Minister should take more of a positive interest in the education of social workers.

3. What service user organisations could do

- Network more widely with other service user organisations and publicise themselves better.
- Develop their own training, support and mentoring for service user trainers.
- Coordinate service user involvement and training in social work education through a national user-controlled organisation.

Service users strongly expressed the view that service user organisations should network more widely with other service user organisations and publicise themselves better.

Publicise the opportunities for involvement.

Publicise themselves better.

We link in with other sickle cell organisations locally and nationally. This is a good thing and brings support and information

Networking [is needed] across service user organisations to learn more about how all of us are involved in social work education.

We need to share our information and how we are doing things.

People recognised that there were difficulties in doing this.

It's a time issue – you get involved in your own thing and then you need time to network, but this time I am using up to network is taken away from my own children.

We need more staff to link it all up – in practice it works half-heartedly. It often isn't practical to network extensively.

But it was felt by many that what was needed was to:

see more networking between organisations and maybe greater coordination by a central network of organisations.

People discussed how user-controlled groups should:

Provide training for more service users to be involved.

Value the experiences of service users who cannot leave their homes because of their impairments, by supporting their involvement.

Develop our own training... that's why we should network. So we can develop it together. Bigger groups could help smaller groups. Or groups that hadn't really developed their own training could learn from other groups who had more experience.

Service user trainers need more support, mentorship from others would help.

Appendix 1

Semi-structured interview to be used in regional consultations

Developing a strategy to support the participation of service users in social work education

Shaping Our Lives is a user-controlled organisation working with a broad range of service users, including people with physical and/or sensory impairments, users/survivors of mental health services, older people, people with learning difficulties, people living with HIV/AIDS, young people and families who have used the care system and people who use or have used palliative care services.

The Department of Health (DoH) has asked the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to work with and support service user organisations so that they can participate equally with all the people involved in social work education.

Shaping Our Lives has been asked by the Social Care Institute for Excellence to organise and facilitate four regional consultation days with service users so more people have the opportunity to contribute to this project. A key outcome of this work will be to draw up a draft strategy document on service user and carer involvement in the social work degree.

We would like to give you an opportunity to tell us a bit about what you think are important issues for the effective involvement of service users and carers in social work education.

The main aim of today is to explore with other service users their views, ideas, experience and proposals for developing and supporting user involvement in social work education. The aim is to identify the key issues around this topic as reported by service users themselves. We are seeking to keep the definition of service user flexible, in order to be inclusive. We will also seek to reflect diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class.

Before we begin the main discussion we would be very grateful if you could all fill in the attached equal opportunities monitoring form. You do not have to fill it in if you do not want to but the information will be extremely useful to Shaping Our Lives in order for us to monitor our policy of inclusion. Thank you.

The project is independent and is based at Shaping Our Lives. Shaping Our Lives is a service user-controlled organisation that has a track record of undertaking independent user-led and user-controlled research, consultation and evaluation.

This project will rigorously seek to abide by principles of total anonymity and strict confidence. By this it is meant that whatever you may say to us will not be attributed to you personally in any way. Everything you say will be treated in complete confidence. Absolutely no names will be used and we will seek to ensure that nothing anybody says could ever be traced to them. We will not mention to anyone what you have individually said. If there are any questions you would like to raise about this we will be happy to discuss them. If you would be happy for your name to be used we would like to discuss this too.

If you would like any further information about this project, please get in touch. We will give you feedback about the results of this work and we will also be working hard to make sure that the issues it raises are heard by educationalists and policy makers and can make a difference.

Definition of a user-controlled organisation

We are taking as our definition of a user-controlled organisation an organisation where at least a majority of the management group and/or people controlling the organisation are defined or self-define as disabled people or service users.

Questions

1. Do you have contact with local universities?

Yes No Don't know

Details

2. If Yes: What kind of contact is this?

3. Are you involved in the education of social workers in any formal way?

4. Can you tell me more about this?

5. How did this involvement first come about?

6. Are you involved in recruitment of students to the courses?

Yes No

7. Are you involved in the design of the course?

Yes No

8. Are you involved in teaching the core components of the course?

Yes No

9. Are you involved in any other teaching on the course?

Yes No

10. Are you involved in the placement of students?

Yes No

11. Are you involved in the assessment of students?

Yes No

12. Are there any other ways in which you are involved in the education of social workers?

13. Are there any ways or areas that you would like to be involved but do not have the opportunity to be involved?

14. If yes, what are these areas and why do you think service users are not involved in them?

15. What do you see as the benefit of involving service users in social work education?

16. Would you and your organisation like to develop stronger links with local universities and colleges?

17. From your experience and experience of your organisation what do you see as being the barriers (if any) to effective service user involvement in social work education?

18. Is there anything that you feel that universities could do to help service user organisations to be more effectively involved in social work education?

19. Is there anything that you feel that the government could do to help service user organisations to be more effectively involved in social work education?

20. Is there anything that you feel that service user organisations could do to help service user organisations to be more effectively involved in social work education?

21. Is there anything else that you feel could be done to help service user organisations be more effectively involved in social work education?

22. Is there anything that you would like to say about service users' involvement in social work education that we haven't talked about?

23. How do you think we (as service users and service user organisations) can share our knowledge and experience of working in social work education among service users and service user organisations more effectively, so that more service users are involved?

24. What do you see as the most important issues for making service user involvement in social work education a positive, productive and effective experience for everyone involved?

25. How can we ensure that effective service user involvement can become a more powerful part of social work education?

26. How can we as service users challenge the way that existing professional knowledge often sidelines and seeks to take over our knowledge based on direct experience of social work and social workers?

27. How can we make sure that service user organisations, and individual service users who work in the university sector, do not become part of university culture, follow the university's agenda and forget their grassroots beginnings?

28. How can we encourage more service user organisations to be involved in effective social work education?

29. How can we encourage and support more individual service users to become involved in effective social work education?

30. How can we encourage and support those service users who traditionally are seen as 'hard to reach' to become more involved in effective social work education?

31. What practical things do you think could be done to ensure that service users and service user organisations are equal partners in the education of social workers?

32. Are there any additional points you would like to add?

33. Are there any questions you would like to ask us?

Thank you for your time

Appendix 2

Suggested ground rules for regional meetings

How we like to do things

- Respect what each person needs in order to join in the meeting.
- Respect and value that everyone is different and will think differently about things. We are happy that everyone is different and thinks differently.
- Listen to each other.
- Ensure that only one person speaks at a time.
- Ensure that when you speak, you say your name and raise your hand or do whatever you can to let others know you are the speaker.
- Do not interrupt the speaker. If you need to interrupt, ask the chairperson.
- Use plain and simple English. Do not talk for too long, and talk slowly. We understand that for some people with some impairments it might be necessary for them to speak for a longer time and that is OK.
- If you don't understand what someone is saying, please ask them to repeat it or explain it. You are probably not the only person who doesn't understand.
- Be aware that covering your mouth when speaking might make it difficult for people to read your lips or hear what you say.
- Use words in full, for example Shaping Our Lives instead of SOL.
- In any reports or discussions after the event do not use people's names when personal things have been discussed, for example when people have talked in confidence about something that has happened to them.
- Be polite, don't be rude to each other. If you disagree about something concentrate on the thing you are talking about not the person involved.
- If you disagree with someone's comments say so either during that meeting or during the next meeting. Do not argue about it outside of the meeting.
- If you want to leave the room for any reason that is OK
- Switch off mobile phones.

Appendix 3

Guidelines for running the consultation event and writing the regional report

Developing a strategy to support the participation of service users in social work education

It is important that the following procedures are followed.

Notes on the procedure for the consultation day

Welcome everyone.

Housekeeping – Explain to everyone where the accessible toilets are, where the accessible fire exits are, etc.

Timing – Let people know what time you will be having a break for lunch, how long the break will be and what time the meeting will end. It is important to stick to this schedule.

Introductions – Introduce yourself. Ask people to introduce themselves briefly.

Ground rules – Read the Shaping Our Lives ground rules. Check that people are happy to work to these rules and ask whether they want to add anything.

Equal opportunities monitoring

Please ask everyone who attends to fill in the equal opportunities form. It is important for Shaping Our Lives to monitor this and it is important that we are able to give accurate information to our funders, the Social Care Institute for Excellence, on this project. We need to know if we are excluding people from our work so that we can do something about it in the future. However, if people object to filling in this form, respect their views.

Note taking and recording –The discussion will need to be recorded. It is up to the facilitator/report writer to do this, in whatever way is best for them. If you are going to tape record the discussion, which is, in our opinion the best way to record it, you must ask people if they feel comfortable with that. Explain that you are recording purely so that you can accurately report on the day's discussions and that the contents of the tape will be erased after the report has been written.

The interview – Read the first section, up to the questions. Ask people whether they have any questions before you start. Explain that you are going to use a semi-structured interview. Even if it appears that you are asking the same question at times, or that people have already answered a question, we would like you to systematically work through the questions. **We would like you to ask all the questions.** If the discussion moves away from the questions but is related to the topic this should be encouraged, but it is important that you always return to the questions. **Please ask every question on the schedule.**

Process notes

Immediately after the consultation day we would like you to write short process notes. These will contain your impressions of the meeting: what were the main points and key issues, from your point of view, that emerged; was it an optimistic meeting; were people all agreeing with each other or not? Process notes should also include a record of the number of service users present, the number of men, the number of women, the number of people from black and minority ethnic communities, the age range of the respondents and the range of services they use.

Notes on report writing

The report should consist of between 3,000 and 4,000 words. We would like the report to be framed around the interview questions. It is very important that the report includes the voices of service users. Include many quoted comments from service users who came to the consultation day.

This report by Shaping Our Lives, the independent, national service user organisation, provides service users' views on service user involvement in social work education. It is part of a larger initiative, developed by the Social Care Institute for Excellence to develop a strategy to support the participation of service users in social work education.

This Report brings together the findings of four regional consultation days that Shaping Our Lives commissioned from four regional service user networks and organisations. The service users were an extremely diverse range of people, in terms of the services that people use and the disabling barriers that people experience. There was a remarkable degree of consistency and agreement in what different service users and service users from different parts of the country say.

The study found that service users value and welcome service user involvement in social work education and it reports on the common barriers to effective involvement from a service user perspective.

The report will be of interest to users of all aspects of social care and those involved with the education of social care workers, policy, practice and provision.

First published in Great Britain in February 2007
by the Social Care Institute for Excellence

© Shaping Our Lives National User Network
BM Box 4845

London WC1N 3XX

Tel: 0845 241 0383

information@shapingourlives.org.uk

[Web: www.shapingourlives.org.uk](http://www.shapingourlives.org.uk)

ISBN 978-1-904812-31-9

Written by Fran Branfield, Peter Beresford
and Enid Levin

ISBN 978-1904812-31-9



9 781904 812319

Designed by Susan Rentoul Design
www.susanrentouldesign.co.uk

Printed by Acorn Press Swindon Ltd
Westmead Drive

Westmead Industrial Estate
Swindon, Wiltshire SN5 7UU