

TRADITIONAL

Reactive: service provided when the situation has deteriorated and the user's networks are unable to cope.

Services at arm's length: services compartmentalised through institutional and bureaucratic procedures and remote location – monopolised by overwhelming demands of individuals within a community.

Professional responsibility: practitioner is entirely responsible for the user's problems.

Centred on individual: the individual is the only target of intervention. Assessment based on their internal problems and the degree of pathology.

COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK

Preventative/pro-active: social work intervenes before a service is referred for statutory intervention.

Services close to community: social work practice determined by the living conditions, environmental and social situations of community members.

Shared responsibility: solutions and responsibilities are mutually agreed and shared.

Centred on social network: the target of intervention is the social network, including the person seeking a service. Assessment centres on the distribution of responsibility and capacities to adapt.

CHANGES REQUIRED

- Reactive responses are gradually replaced by preventative interventions
- Gradual reduction of case load approach by individual social workers
- Close interaction with the local community

- Variability and flexibility in service provision
- Individualised services and not community to service provision
- Informal networks of support of importance
- Professional responsibility

- Social workers direct and support these responsibilities

- The social worker assesses the weight of responsibility experienced by practitioners to support them and to elicit support from the community potentially seek a service



Social Work (Scotland)

Act 1968

CHAPTER 49

The Future of Social Work

– Remembering the Purpose of Social Work as a Profession

Colin Turbett

1968 Act s12 – “...the promotion of social welfare”

"Social workers should be attentive to events and developments within the communities they serve, anticipating needs that are likely to arise... The workload of local authority social work teams should be planned to include activity designed to explore and monitor situations and developments within communities they serve with a view to anticipating need and planning ahead for the provision to meet it." and "Social workers should be attentive to the plans and activities of agencies – their own and any others... it might involve, for example, direct negotiation, enabling people in the community to exercise direct influence, and/or referring information to senior management level for action."

Social Work Services Group, 1968



What happened to Social Work in Scotland?

- 1970s – expansion into communities
- 1980s – social work on the defensive
- 1990s – intrusion of care management and marketisation with a brokerage role; increasing specialisation with a focus on risk; practice moves downstream and access to services determined by eligibility criteria. Local Government reorganisation
- 2000s – austerity
- 2010s – focus on “lived experience” and (again!) on integration with health



“Changing Lives” 2005

The Impact of Broken Systems on Social Work

- Obsession with risk
- Centralised, siloed and inaccessible service delivery models
- Disconnects between education, policy and practice – driven by continued budgetary concerns
- Disillusioned and burned out staff (see: *Setting the Bar* report)
- The farming out of responsibility to promote social welfare





What Social Workers Have the Skills to Do

Work with people – not against them – relationship based social work – with a focus on prevention rather than reactive response to crisis

- Respect and understanding – agreement on goals
- Honesty and acknowledgement of power imbalances
- Emphasis on strengths rather than deficits
- Resilience building rather than risk surveillance
- Celebrating creativity and artistry

Taking Social Work Back to Communities

Characteristics of Community Social Work

- CSW differs from broad Community Development although it may include some of its strategies and techniques
- It rests on “upstream” approaches that aim to tackle common problems and their individual manifestations, through early identification and mutually identified solution – *if we can stop people falling in the river in the first place they will not need to be rescued from drowning* (Smale et al 2000)
- It might involve groupwork, an activity focus and/or social action, but also incorporates creative and imaginative social work interventions e.g. family group conferencing, restorative justice, mentoring, alleviation of social isolation and loneliness – and individual support
- It is rooted in the community it aims to serve and draws strength and purpose from its networks, activists and ordinary members
- It is a bottom up activity and cannot be prescribed from outside or above – but it does require support from policy makers, senior managers and it needs inspired leaders at local level





Recovery Plan!

Making the transition from individualised reactive interventions to preventative, relationship-based, community orientated support:

- Statutory and public protection responsibilities have to be undertaken but we need to bring a focus on preventative social work back into the mainstream
- This will release social work's potential to help mend broken communities as well as support their individual victims
- Build from the bottom alongside community members

Time for Community Social Work!