

'What are we worth?' Workshop Report

1. Introduction

Scottish Voices, supported by a Working Group (made up of the following organisations: IRISS; Scottish Social Services Learning Network; SSSC and the Scottish Consortium of Learning Disabilities), hosted a full-day's workshop on the 27th February 2008 to raise awareness of, and stimulate debate about, how service users and carers can be adequately compensated and rewarded for their contribution to social services development - whether it is through participating in consultation exercises, or contributing to social work and social care education programmes.

The morning started with the Scottish Government 'Setting the context' for the importance of Service Users and Carers involvement within social services. This then lead on to two Service Users and Carers personal accounts, which identified some key issues about recognition and rewards experienced by them when contributing to improvements in learning and the development of service delivery within the sector. This was followed by a session lead by Job Centre Plus on 'Unravelling the recognition and reward web' with particular attention on payment associated with rewarding and recognising Service Users and Carer contributions.

The afternoon took on the format of Workshops and the 7 groups were asked to consider:

'What might be necessary for Service Users and Carers to be more involved, rightly recognised and positively rewarded for the valuable work they do?'

The afternoon was rounded up by asking the whole group to consider the question:

'Is there a collective way forward?'

2. Workshop Feedback

There were strong messages and themes through out the feedback and this briefing will highlight these.

i. Three key messages have emerged for all those who are involved, wish to be involved, or are requesting others to get involved:

- ↳ **Clarity of purpose** for involvement and boundaries within which it happens.
- ↳ **Inclusion** is a key principle. Recognising difference and the varied contributions that are being made at all levels is vital.
- ↳ The **need for ongoing induction, training and support** for all staff and Service Users and Carers engaged in this process is recognised and acted upon.

These messages should be addressed by all, through out the life cycle of engagement, and should be used as a means of evaluating the process of involvement.

ii. Three main themes that have been identified and requested by delegates at this event have been listed below (see **Appendix i**, for a diagram format):

- ↳ **Commitment** from policy makers on meeting agendas.
- ↳ **Practical Support** provided for Service Users and Carers by those engaging them to meet their requirements.
- ↳ **Induction, Training and Support** for all by all.

↳ **Commitment, what does this mean?**

The Scottish Government is being asked to show its commitment in meeting its agenda of involving Service Users and Carers in service design and delivery, strategic decision making partnerships, consultations, events, etc by ensuring that barriers to their involvement are removed. Examples of barriers are: the benefits system; local government policies; policies across agencies on reward and recognition.

'Kill the idea that involvement will just happen, we need the commitment from policy makers.'

'Policies in Local Government should include involvement as the norm with the necessary processes and procedures in place.'

'The Government wants everyone back to work. How are they going to adapt the benefit system to make sure people are supported to take a step forward, such as working with a university's Service Users and Carers group?'

'Scottish Government should recognise that Service Users and Carers payments are to contribute to better services and should exempt them from benefit reductions.'

'Confusing and inflexible benefits system works against people who should be paid for their involvement. This contradicts with policy guidance around user involvement.'

➔ **Practical support, what does this mean?**

When talking about practical support, consideration should be given to the Service Users and Carers financial, physical, psychological and emotional needs. The experience of being involved is much more than just the meeting.

'Plain language is important (avoid jargon).'

'Staff seem to take hours to prepare for reviews detracting from time providing support – whereas users could be much more involved earlier and their views heard and acknowledged.'

'People need good information – clear, easy to understand, timely, the right information to ask the right questions.'

'Re Scottish Government downloadable documents – can colour ink be reduced? Can "background" ink be reduced? (less to print).'

'Important for involvement to be person centred – taking into account individual needs... including: communication; personal care, mobility, etc.'

➔ **Induction, training and support, what does this mean and for who?**

As new strategies are introduced, agendas are set, and workplans are progressed the need to induct new staff and

Service Users and Carers is high, as is the need to provide training and support in terms of new policies, strategies and changing Service Users and Carer support needs. This should be provided for all staff and service users and carers engaged in the development of service user and carer involvement.

'Do Job Centre Plus staff need to provide their employees with more training in anti-discrimination?'

'Support and training before, during and after for service users, carers and professionals.'

'People awareness, there needs to be support available to those making transition between being on benefits to being in full/part- time employment or education.'

'Training needs to address all levels, individuals ⇔ strategic planning.'

3. Rewards and Recognition

This takes us back to the message that there needs to be clarity of purpose for involvement and boundaries within which it happens. Clarity of purpose would outline why policy makers, organisations and umbrella groups think it is important for Service Users and Carers to be involved and the boundaries would make what was being offered for Service Users and Carers involvement and what Service Users and Carers require to be involved clear.

'Reward isn't just about finance. But by being paid at the going rate, is a crucial way of recognising what we do, often at a personal and emotional cost.'

NOTE: All comments gathered at this event are provided in **Appendix ii** of this report.

4. Working Group

The following people are members of the 'What are we worth?' Working Group:

Name	Organisation
Elinor Dowson	Scottish Voices
Wendy Paterson	Scottish Social Services Learning Network, South East
Ann Tavendale	Scottish Social Services Learning Network, Tayforth
Linda Walker	IRISS
Brenda Gillies	SSSC
Andy Miller	Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability

What are we worth?

'Strategy for user involvement won't happen if it is not given central impetus and funding. The strategy is too far down the agenda for cash strapped Local Authorities.'

Commitment from Policy Makers on meeting agendas

Clarity of purpose
for involvement and boundaries
within which it happens.

Inclusion is a key principle. Recognising difference and the varied contributions, which are being made at all levels, is vital.

'Everyone is different. Make it possible for all to have an opportunity to contribute to SW education. One size does not fit all...'

'Training should be provided to Job Centre staff about the differences between employment + involvement.'

Practical Support

- ↳ Pre meetings.
- ↳ Preparation support.
- ↳ Consideration to financial, physical, psychological and emotional needs.
- ↳ Less jargon with a move to achieving 'Plain English'

Given that these will happen
as a matter of course.

'If someone does voluntary work and they require support is there any financial help for support or transport expenses? The supporter gets paid!'

'... it does not work when done on the cheap or without enough time, preparation or resources.'

Ongoing induction, training and support for all staff and service users and carers engaged in the development of service user and carer involvement in influencing service delivery, decision making, policy setting and acts of parliament e.g. the anti-discrimination act.

Suggestions and Comments raised about issues presented:

Scottish Government (1)

<p>Confusing and inflexible benefits system works against people who should be paid for their involvement – contradicts with policy guidance around involvement.</p>	<p>We should have MSPs and MPs here! Legislation needs to change.</p>
<p>Four years ago I wrote an article on the clash between user involvement policies and DWP rules. Nothing has changed in the past 4 years, hard to see how it will change.</p>	<p>Scottish government need to get their act together. There's such disparity across Scotland – one national remuneration system. It's not rocket science.</p>
<p>User involvement is a government policy – how will they fund this without impacting on benefits.</p>	<p>Benefit system needs to be changed so carers are not penalised.</p>
<p>When is this change to the benefit system taking place and who is going to be responsible for it?</p>	<p>Strategy for user involvement won't happen if it is not given central impetus and funding - the strategy is too far down the agenda for cash-strapped local authorities!</p>
<p>Question to government – What budget has been set aside to pay services users/carers to be involved in consultation, training of staff and students.</p>	<p>Carers and service users have busy frantic stressed lives. They don't have time or energy to keep finding out about the benefits system. Recognise their contribution now and get this sorted out!</p>

<p>People on income support should be able to do longer term work experience – 3 months + needed for learning disability and mental health.</p>	<p>Permitted earnings need to rise as national minimum wage does.</p>
<p>Scottish Government downloadable docs – can colour/ink be reduced? Can 'background' ink be reduced – less to print.</p>	<p>Scottish Government consultation events – can there be a 'car share' service – would be greener!</p>
<p>What funding is available locally and nationally to support user involvement groups?</p>	<p>Will the £20 disregard be looked at more urgently?</p>
<p>Surely if there is such a drive to include people in social work education then funds need to be made available to achieve this?</p>	<p>The government wants everyone back to work. How are they going to adapt the benefit system to make sure people are supported to take steps forward such as working with involving carer/su groups</p>
<p>Why are there so many barriers to financially rewarding people?</p>	<p>Is there a way to set up a brokerage scheme where people can deposit their earnings from involvement and claim it back tax free?</p>

Job Centre Plus (2)

<p>More effort should be made to make sure service users/carers can approach their Jobcentre about involvement activity without fear.</p>	<p>'Averaging rules' – can payments be spread over the course of a period of time if involvement is intermittent?</p>
<p>How do we make sure a review of people's benefits isn't initiated if people get involved in activity that could be viewed by Jobcentres as work related?</p>	<p>Housing benefits. The position is very unclear. I had a casual job when I was a carer, no one told me that my HB had stopped. The first I knew was a letter from GHA saying I was £400 in arrears – I didn't even have a regular income – it went up and down from week to week. I tended to work 15-20 hours.</p>
<p>How trained/confident are Jobcentre Plus staff in helping people with eg learning disabilities, mental health problems or sensory impairment?</p>	<p>Training should be provided to Jobcentre staff about the differences between employment and involvement.</p>
<p>The person from the JobCentre Plus wasn't able to tell us anything that wasn't in the Summary of Reward and Recognition in the pack. Can we access someone who can tell us how to change policy/DWP rules?</p>	<p>What about 'notional' earnings. If I refuse payment it still is treated as if I have been paid – I lose out!</p>
<p>Four years ago I wrote an article on the clash between user involvement policies and DWP rules. Nothing has changed in the past 4 years, hard to see how it will change.</p>	<p>I am still confused about Income Support/Housing Benefit. No-one offered to help me when I obtained casual employment. I was worse off. Where does working tax credit fit in?</p>
<p>Benefit system needs to be changed so carers are not penalised</p>	<p>Can we not set up a pension scheme for people being paid for consulting or</p>

	training
When disabled people visit the Jobcentre they are often told to come back when the disability advisor is there – once a week. Why can't all staff answer their queries?	If you are on incapacity benefit and were doing voluntary work, are you then classed as fit to work, and would be pushed into getting back to work
Professionals salaries increase by inflation or more each year. Why should permitted earnings not do the same?	When is this change to the benefit system taking place and who is going to be responsible for it?
If someone does voluntary work and they require support is there any financial help for the support or transport expenses? The supporter gets paid!	Strategy for user involvement won't happen if it is not given central impetus and funding - the strategy is too far down the agenda for cash-strapped local authorities!
People on income support should be able to do longer term work experience – 3 months + needed for learning disability and mental health	Carers and service users have busy frantic stressed lives. They don't have time or energy to keep finding out about the benefits system. Recognise their contribution now and get this sorted out!
Permitted earnings needs to rise as national minimum wage does	How will benefits in kind be treated eg vouchers, club memberships, tokens?
Most people involved as service users/carers do so for a short term/ad hoc/ or one off basis. Benefits system must be able to support this.	What benefits are available to existing claimants that fall into the new benefit category?
Not helpful to have someone from Jobcentre who can't answer basic questions – creates concerns and uncertainties for people.	Can we not consider a scheme were people are considered tax exempt from contributing to training?

<p>Why are there so many barriers to financially rewarding people?</p>	<p>Will the £20 disregard be looked at more urgently?</p>
<p>Barriers to entering Jobcentre in 1st place for many people – better to seek independent advice from vol.org. welfare rights before going to Jobcentre .</p>	<p>The government wants everyone back to work. How are they going to adapt the benefit system to make sure people are supported to take steps forward such as working with involving carer/su groups?</p>
<p>What happened about the £20 disregard? Why are people working less and less hours?</p>	<p>When will the £20 disregard increase This is deterring individuals from accessing employment and fulfilling their ambition.</p>
<p>Is there a way to set up a brokerage scheme where people can deposit their earnings from involvement and claim it back tax free?</p>	

Other (3)

<p>In the need to involve the people who are 'hard to engage', don't dismiss/belittle those who are already involved as 'usual faces' – it's very hurtful and discounts the efforts we continually make to be and stay involved. Many of those who don't get involved decide not to when they see how we are treated, how painful it can be.</p>	<p>Do we or how do we manage and respond to the emotional and practical impact that sharing experiences and contributing can have on services users?</p>
<p>It is important for everyone especially services users and carers to realise that social workers and students may also be service users and/or carers and NOT assume that they are not 'living in the real world'.</p>	<p>How do we gather and represent the views of service users who are not able to participate in groups like Scottish Voices?</p>
<p>How do we support service users to contribute their views, ideas and experiences without expecting them to deal with the challenges of presenting in formal settings such as meetings, conferences and workshops – can we be more creative?</p>	<p>User and carer involvement needs to be budgeted for, it does not work when done on the cheap or without enough time and preparation and resources. Do not ignore the costs (financial and otherwise).</p>
<p>Reward isn't just about finance. BUT being paid at going rate, is a crucial way of recognising what we do, often at personal and emotional cost.</p>	<p>What about the training and support to do user and carer involvement? Recognising what we do by qualifications, references, etc to help moving into new paid/unpaid opportunities.</p>
<p>How would I develop a user and carer forum to education social work students</p>	<p>Local service delivery groups.</p>

<p>in my area?</p>	
<p>More training for social work, I am a service user and I know from personal experience, social work in Perth doesn't have a good knowledge of drugs (people who misuse drugs or alcohol) and I would be happy for sw to ask me questions about my past to try to give them a better understanding how to support services users and their carers.</p>	<p>This event is a chance we must all seize to get the system changed. Have you got the courage and passion to support carers and service users * to make the system better.</p>
<p>Raise awareness of the support available to those making the transition between being on benefits to full or part time employment or education.</p>	<p>Advocacy for people with learning disabilities.</p>
<p>If carers and users are the experts by experience, how can any problem be put in the way of their achieving the passing on of their experience – don't we want the best system of health?</p>	<p>Everyone is different. Make it possible for all to have an opportunity to contribute to social work education. One size does not fit all. People not systems.</p>
<p>How does this (Scottish Voices) interface with substance misuse involvement groups and DAT teams?</p>	