



Connected Learning • Effective Practice • Responsive Services

# Student Focus on Child Care and Protection

Report on the development and  
embedding of Key Capabilities  
in Child Care and Protection into  
social work programmes



# Student Focus on Child Care and Protection

Report on the development and  
embedding of Key Capabilities in Child  
Care and Protection into social work  
programmes

First published by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) in October 2008

Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, 9 Dudhope Terrace, Dundee, DD3 6HG

[www.iriss.ac.uk](http://www.iriss.ac.uk)

©Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without the prior permission of the publisher.



## Contents

Introduction .....	4
Key Milestones .....	6
Key Capabilities .....	6
Consultative Process .....	8
Analysis: Key Themes and Areas of Learning .....	17
Conclusion .....	24
References .....	26
Appendix 1: Project Team/Reference Group .....	27
Appendix 2: Detailed Chronology .....	28
Appendix 3: Key Capabilities Bibliography .....	30
Appendix 4: Summary of the Phase One Feedback from Key Stakeholders .....	32
Appendix 5: Online survey questions and answers, June 2007 .....	34
Appendix 6: Autumn workshops 2007 - Feedback from small group exercises .....	38
Appendix 7: Feedback from interviews, Spring 2008 .....	46
Appendix 8: Feedback from questionnaire sent to stakeholders, Spring 2008 .....	52
Appendix 9: Feedback from service user and carer focus groups .....	56
Appendix 10: Change Academy and Key Capabilities .....	59
Appendix 11: Leaflet for people who use services and carers .....	60



# Student Focus on Child Care and Protection

## Report on the development and embedding of Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection into social work programmes

### Introduction

This report describes the development of Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection. These set out the knowledge and skills an emerging social worker should have in relation to children and their needs by the point of qualifying.

The O'Brien report in 2003 about the death of Caleb Ness highlighted that "Professionals....operated from within a narrow perspective without full appreciation for the wider picture." A key message from the report was that there had been a "...failure by criminal justice workers and management to recognise that they did have some responsibility for child protection" (Executive Summary 2003). This had clear

resonance in Scotland following the publication in 2002 of the child protection audit and review, the title of which and underpinning theme was "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright." The messages from key documents about the responsibility of all social workers towards children acted as a catalyst for the then Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government) to fund a project overseen by the Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (now Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, IRISS) entitled Child Protection Training and Development Project (CPTDP).



The project had a number of aims:

- To complete and disseminate an audit of child care and protection teaching and learning within qualifying social work programmes in Scotland.
- To consult with stakeholders (including representatives from universities, employers, services users and carers and practice teachers) in order to develop Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection - the core skills and knowledge students should demonstrate prior to qualification.
- To contribute towards the process of embedding Key Capabilities within social work programmes.

The project's remit was to consider child care and protection in the context of qualifying social work programmes. The work of the project was overseen by a multi-disciplinary reference group including representation from health, education, statutory and voluntary employing agencies, police, Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), Centres of Excellence, Scottish Government and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The reference group met three monthly and provided professional advice through the integration of multiple perspectives. The group acted in a quality assurance capacity by providing appraisal and constructive feedback as part of an iterative process. The reference group meetings enabled the project team to report progress against project aims, budgets and timescales.

The project team was comprised of two project officers and a project lead from the Centre for Child Care and Protection at University of Dundee, overseen by a project manager from IRISS. (See Appendix 1 for details of reference group and project team.)

The project worked closely with representatives from the SSSC which has a continuing role in monitoring the embedding of Key Capabilities. There were two phases, the first involved the development of the Key Capabilities and the document to support them, the second supported the embedding of Key Capabilities within social work programmes.

This report describes phases one and two of the project and includes feedback from stakeholders at key stages. The report will also analyse the themes which emerged during the development and implementation of Key Capabilities.



## Key milestones

A full chronology is presented in Appendix 2, here we present the main milestones of the project:

- 2004 – the Child Care and Protection Training and Development Reference Group established.
- 2004 – audit of teaching and learning in child care and protection across social work programmes delivered in Scottish universities.
- Mid 2005 – consultation about the nature of Key Capabilities undertaken with a range of key stakeholders.
- Late 2005 – draft Key Capabilities distributed to key stakeholders for comment, final draft sent to the Scottish Executive.
- May/June 2006 – Key Capabilities final draft disseminated via a series of national workshops.
- 13th June 2006 – Ministerial letter sent to all universities advising that Key Capabilities must be embedded in qualifying social work programmes from September 2007.
- December 2006 – final Key Capabilities document published by Scottish Executive and distributed widely to university and employer partners.

- April 2007 – Second phase to support the embedding of Key Capabilities across university social work programmes.
- June 2007 – survey carried out to establish a baseline of current activity.
- July 2007 – SSSC remind key stakeholders that Key Capabilities require to be embedded from September 2007.
- Autumn 2007 – series of national workshops to facilitate the embedding process.
- October 2007 – Key Capabilities website goes live.
- October 2007 – leaflet developed for service users and carers.
- January to May 2008 – consultation with key stakeholders regarding the embedding process.

## Key Capabilities

The 2004 audit found that all universities covered child care and protection within their programmes; however this varied in depth and approach. It also found that some child care and protection learning was located within more generic teaching areas.

Consequently, it may have been more difficult for students to relate this learning to child care and protection situations than it would be if the learning opportunities were labelled as ‘child care and protection’.



At that point there was no consistent measure of the level of knowledge and skills students achieved in relation to child care and protection at the end of their programme.

The audit found that in some universities it would be possible for a student to choose to ‘steer a path’ around child protection. The overall picture from the audit was that students emerging with a social work qualification from university ‘X’ or university ‘Y’ might not necessarily share core skills and knowledge in relation to child care and protection.

The Key Capabilities were designed to ensure that all social work students emerging from universities are able to demonstrate they have core knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to child care and protection that they can draw on whether they work in adult or children’s services.

Different practitioners may have different definitions of child protection, and what the term means. Within Key Capabilities the term ‘child protection’ is used in its broadest sense to mean child protection in the context of child care and meeting children’s needs rather than solely the investigative interviewing process.

The final Key Capabilities were developed on the basis of significant levels of consultation and reference to existing education and training frameworks. The details of the consultation and feedback are set out later in

the report. The Key Capabilities that emerged from this process were developed under four themes:

### 1) Effective Communication

### 2) Knowledge and Understanding

### 3) Professional Confidence and Competence

### 4) Values and Ethical practice

Under each of these headings Key Capabilities sets out what a student is required to demonstrate over the course of their studies and within practice. Throughout the document there are examples of how student learning in child care and protection could be evidenced. The document is also informed by other relevant frameworks, including Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce (2005), The Ten Essential Shared Capabilities: A Framework for the Whole of the Mental Health Workforce (2004), Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards (2004), The Children’s Charter (2004) and Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers (2003). (See Appendix 3 for Key Capabilities Bibliography.)

Running through Key Capabilities is an expectation that students will be asked to demonstrate ethical and non-discriminatory practice both in academic and practice learning settings in accordance with the SSSC Codes of Practice (2003).



Similarly, it is expected that universities and local authority/voluntary agencies offering practice learning opportunities will be working within current legislative frameworks to promote equal opportunities for students.

Key Capabilities sit within a generic social work programme and therefore are aligned with the Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland: Standards in Social Work Education (2003). This means that in meeting the Key Capabilities a student would also meet some, but not all of the Standards. Assessment of Key Capabilities does not preclude assessment of other areas; rather it should be one component of assessing the overall skills of the student. Social work programmes are aligned to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Key Capabilities sit within levels 7 to 10 for the degree, and level 10 for post-graduate routes.

## Consultative Process

The development and implementation of each stage of Key Capabilities has been consistently underpinned by an iterative process of consultation and feedback. The list below illustrates the range and sources of feedback.

### Phase One of the project – Development of the Key Capabilities:

- Individual discussions with representatives from universities including:
  - Whether the 2004 audit of teaching and learning reflected their experience.
  - The need for Key Capabilities and essential components.
  - Implications for curricular content across teaching.
- Individual discussion with practice teachers from local authorities and voluntary sector:
  - The need for Key Capabilities and essential components.
  - The need for Key Capabilities to be levelled and aligned to SCQF.
- Individual discussion with service user representatives:
  - Whether there was a need for Key Capabilities and essential components.



- Discussion with ADSW Child Protection sub group:
  - The need for Key Capabilities and essential components.
  - Appropriate level for emerging practitioners.
  - Capacity for practice learning to meet the requirements of Key Capabilities.
- Discussion with practice teachers and university representatives on first draft:
  - The need for Key Capabilities and essential components.
  - Appropriate level for practice.
  - Capacity for practice learning to meet the requirements of Key Capabilities.
- Four workshops:
  - Final draft presented – disseminating information.
  - Identifying hopes and anxieties.
  - Seeking views and examples regarding implementation.
- Verbal feedback from qualified practitioners undertaking continuing professional development (CPD) child protection programmes regarding the preparedness of newly qualified social workers in the field of child care and protection.

- Small scale sample – questionnaire to newly qualified social workers undertaking CPD programme in child care and protection.

Appendix 4 contains a summary of Phase One feedback.

### Phase Two of the Project – Embedding of the Key Capabilities:

- Event in one local authority:
  - Participants provided examples of how Key Capabilities might look in practice.
- Online survey to all those previously involved in phase one of the project seeking their views about:
  - The progress they were making embedding Key Capabilities.
  - Feedback about their experience so far regarding the process of embedding.
  - Suggestions about what might help the embedding process?
- Practice Teacher event.
- Five national workshops (jointly with SSSC).

The event for practice teachers and the 5 workshops included:

- Presentation on Key Capabilities.
- Opportunity to raise questions and concerns.



- Written feedback from small groups about:
  - How they are embedding Key Capabilities.
  - Any known outcomes for children and families.
  - Challenges experienced so far in embedding Key Capabilities and how they overcame these.
  - Methods of assessment being used or explored.
- Workshop evaluation sheets.
- Teaching input on a qualifying social work programme:
  - Students asked to comment on what Key Capabilities would bring to a practice learning opportunity.
- Questionnaires sent to all those previously consulted, workshop attendees and students currently undertaking qualifying programmes asking for information in following key areas:
  - Positive outcomes and challenges about meeting Key Capabilities.
  - Service user and carer involvement in Key Capabilities.
  - Practice Learning opportunities to meet Key Capabilities.
  - Assessment of Key Capabilities.
  - Suggestions for help with embedding process.
- Telephone or face to face interviews with representatives from all universities and some voluntary agencies seeking information in following key areas:
  - Positive outcomes and challenges about meeting Key Capabilities.
  - Service user and carer involvement in Key Capabilities.
  - Practice Learning opportunities to meet Key Capabilities.
  - Assessment of Key Capabilities.
  - Suggestions for help with embedding process.
- Two focus groups with Service users and carers.
- Key Capabilities website:
  - Through phase two academics, students, service users, carers and practice teachers have been invited to share examples of how Key Capabilities have been met. This information has been disseminated via the website.



## Feedback on Process of Embedding

### June 2007 online survey

In June 2007 an online survey was carried out to seek baseline information about the implementation of Key Capabilities at that stage.

### Summary of information from online survey

(for survey questions please see Appendix 5):

37 individuals completed the survey: 5 from universities, 30 from local authority or voluntary organisations, 1 student and 1 representative from the then Scottish Executive. At that point most who completed the survey had read the document, 15 were unsure as to whether/how their organisation was starting to implement Key Capabilities.

When asked about the positives of implementing Key Capabilities comments included views that it had *'heightened staff awareness'*, it had *'reinforced the message of It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright, the 2002 Child Protection Audit and Review'* and the *'integration between learning and practice'*.

In terms of the challenges, the feedback included difficulties with tight timescales, *'lack of information about Key Capabilities in their workplace'*, being unclear about the *'implications for practice learning opportunities'* in environments where this was already difficult to achieve, and anxieties about Key Capabilities being

*'another layer of standards creating additional complexity and sometimes bureaucracy.'*

The survey requested practice examples but few responses were received at this stage. Those who provided examples gave specific instances from practice and within universities about how students were meeting Key Capabilities. One example was from an academic who had organised collaborative learning across disciplines.

The survey asked how the project could best share information and there were a number of suggestions. These included a newsletter, the development of written material and not making the assumption that everyone had access to the internet.

In response to these comments project officers contributed to the SSSC Practice Learning newsletter, developed and updated written material on the Key Capabilities website and in addition to posting information there, also wrote to people via the e-mail addresses they had provided.

The feedback from the survey also helped the project team to plan the content of the workshops which were held in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Stirling during autumn 2007.

Participants at these workshops looked in detail at particular aspects of Key Capabilities. Small groups comprised representatives from different areas of



practice (child and adult teams) and from different universities who discussed how Key Capabilities might be embedded within qualifying programmes. They also considered what the challenges might be in their specific work area, and how these might be overcome. One of the aims of Key Capabilities was that they would improve outcomes for children and their families. Given this, and the concerns expressed in phase one, that they might be embedded in ways which were not meaningful, the groups were asked to consider what they wanted outcomes to be for users of services. Participants were also asked to share assessment strategies in respect of Key Capabilities.

**Key themes which emerged from these workshops addressed content and process issues and are summarised below:**

- There was a general view that the Key Capabilities covered the important issues in relation to child care and protection and that meeting them would be congruent with good social work practice.
- It was recognised that there were challenges for practice teachers in providing the range of required learning opportunities, especially for the assessment of a child or of parenting capacity. However, there was a view that creative practice learning

opportunities could be developed, building on existing good links between different practice settings. Key Capabilities might act as a catalyst for new links within and across teams and disciplines. It would be important to ensure that students were not caught in the middle of different service perspectives on issues of child care and protection.

- There was discussion about the need for clear and explicit dialogue between universities and employers to ensure agreement about where each Key Capability could be met in either the academic or practice components of programmes. Clear communication would also be necessary with regard to individual students to ensure that they were supported to cover all Key Capabilities and that assessment was appropriate. Although implementation was at a relatively early stage, participants identified a range of examples as to how students could be assessed, using methods which were already in use, for example direct observation, learning logs and student presentations, supervision, written work.
- There was a concern about whether there were sufficient resources to ensure that all students could have access to the appropriate range of learning opportunities. Challenges which individuals could foresee



included limitations in resources, and difficulties which might arise from different teams or disciplines having different perspectives.

- The process of disclosure and associated delays was cited as an ongoing problem in planning practice learning opportunities.
- Across the groups there was a desire and a commitment that Key Capabilities would be embedded in ways which were ethical for service users and carers, students and organisations. For example, students should only be involved with children and their families where this is in their interests and has been identified as a need.
- There were a range of views from academics about the ease with which they could be embedded. Many could identify ways in which their programmes already covered the issues highlighted in the Key Capabilities, although the stages and levels might not directly equate with the document.
- There were discussions about the process of communication and dissemination and timescales for embedding Key Capabilities – the views indicated that communication within organisations can be patchy.

(The exercises used in the workshops, and detailed feedback are available in Appendix 6.)

During spring 2008 the project officers 'revisited' all universities that deliver qualifying social work programmes in Scotland. Interviews were conducted, either by phone or through face to face meetings. All those interviewed had been involved in the first phase of consultation prior to Key Capabilities being published, and the majority (but not all) had attended at least one of the workshops in summer 2006 or autumn 2007.

Further to this, a questionnaire was sent to all those who had previously attended workshops and to students on qualifying programmes, seeking their views about the success so far of embedding Key Capabilities. There were 23 returns. These figures broke down into 14 practice teachers, 2 workforce planning/ workforce development officers, 5 students and 2 academics.

(Appendices 7 and 8 contain the questions and a comprehensive note of the feedback from the phone interviews and questionnaires.)

There were a number of key areas which arose during the interviews and in completed questionnaires and these are summarised below:

When asked to consider what their hopes and anxieties had initially been, and whether these had changed there were a number of themes which arose, including the hope that Key Capabilities would bring



a greater focus on the needs of the child, and an anxiety that this should not be at the expense of other service users and carers. There was an anxiety expressed by some academics that Key Capabilities would have a detrimental impact on the generic nature of social work programmes.

A number of those interviewed indicated that the most positive outcome of Key Capabilities was that it had raised awareness of responsibility towards children and their families amongst students and practitioners. One academic commented that it was *'getting practitioners and practice teachers who wouldn't normally look at child care and protection to think hard about constructive ways of working with and for children'*.

This issue arose further as seen in a comment made on a completed questionnaire when a practitioner said *'...child care and protection is everyone's job and concerns about children cut across service user groups'*.

In terms of the challenges, several people commented that a worrying sign was that some individuals both in practice and university settings had not yet heard of Key Capabilities. This was echoed by those students who submitted completed questionnaires, some of whom had been given very little information about Key Capabilities before their practice learning opportunities.

Some of those who commented both in interviews and on questionnaires indicated that the challenge had been that the document had been too prescriptive, whereas others wanted it to be more prescriptive, particularly in relation to assessment. A number of those commented on the challenges created by the short timescales for introduction, particularly as a number of people said they had not been aware of the ministerial letter sent in June 2006, and/or the SSSC letter in July 2007.

The audit of 2004 indicated that at that point different social work programmes were aligned to different SCQF levels. In order to meet Key Capabilities all social work students need to meet level 10 SCQF in practice and academic work at the point of qualifying. The vast majority of those who responded to the survey said that there had been no problems with the level. However, in the interviews, one academic commented that *'...the document is too prescriptive and it raises issues about what is taught at what level. Programmes had been designed with a rationale and had been approved academically and by SSSC.'*

There were mixed views about the extent to which users and carers had been informed about the Key Capabilities.

When reflecting on the aspect of Key Capabilities that asks students in practice learning opportunities to 'evidence their



knowledge of child care and protection as it is relevant to that setting' (6:2006) the feedback was generally positive. One person commented that *'there could be a wide interpretation of relevant'*, and another that *'students seem to miss this and concentrate on the assessment part,'* a number commented that this had been linked to positive outcomes and had *'enriched student learning'*.

During one of their practice learning opportunities students are required 'to undertake an assessment of a child or parenting capacity' (6:2006). Although there was a recognition that this had meant increased organisation, most were positive about this aspect with one person commenting that *'it is not always easy, but I feel it is so important that it doesn't matter it is not always easy'*. Several people commented that what counted as *'an assessment'* could be defined by different people in different ways.

### Service User and Carer Focus Groups

Through the Scottish Voices<sup>1</sup> network, a wide range of service users and carers were contacted and invited to participate in a focus group to discuss Key Capabilities. A summary of Key Capabilities was sent

out with initial invitations alongside information about the reason for the focus group. These meetings were organised in Aberdeen and Edinburgh to meet the needs of those who responded. Pre-meeting information sent to confirmed participants included a set of questions to be addressed at the meeting and a further copy of the Key Capabilities summary.

(See Appendix 9 for questions and summary of feedback.)

### Ownership of Key Capabilities

Throughout phases one and two of the project, ongoing consultation and involvement of stakeholders has been an important principle of the project team. This was to ensure that Key Capabilities would belong to those who were going to have key responsibility for embedding them in practice and academic work. During phase two, a number of universities and other bodies organised internal as well as wider stakeholder events for those involved in supporting the embedding of Key Capabilities. One university has chosen to focus on the embedding of Key Capabilities for a national change project initiative (see below).

<sup>1</sup>Scottish Voices is an organisation which seeks to provide a national platform for the voice of Service Users and Carers within social work education in Scotland. All of the people involved with Scottish Voices work either with the universities who teach social work education or with the new Learning Networks.



Others have taken the embedding of Key Capabilities in other directions as described in a podcast available on the project website ([www.iriss.ac.uk/keycapabilities](http://www.iriss.ac.uk/keycapabilities)) where at the University of Dundee, inter-disciplinary teaching and learning has broadened both social work and health students knowledge of child care and protection. Another podcast, from a practitioner, identifies how they have embedded Key Capabilities within a practice learning opportunity.

### Change Academy and Key Capabilities

Each university delivering the social work degree in Scotland has participated in the Change Academy Social Work Scotland (CASWS), a year long government funded initiative which invited university social work departments to field a team to address a project related to enhancement of the social work degree, and to strengthen academic leadership. The Robert Gordon University project entitled, *'Evidence Based Practice in relation to Key Capabilities: embedding this in the curriculum'* focused solely on embedding Key Capabilities across their range of social work programmes.

Evidence of recent work, which highlights both their commitment to and ownership of Key Capabilities has included:

- 2 practitioner/learning network workshops which shared good practice and understanding regarding appropriate evidence to meet Key Capabilities.
- Questionnaires to students to gain evidence about their own and others' understanding of Key Capabilities.
- Planned staff workshop – to look at how to improve evidence informed approaches across their programme, using Key Capabilities as a vehicle.

As with all of the Change Academy projects, each of the other universities will benefit from the project outcomes.

(For more detail please see Appendix 10)



### Analysis: Key Themes and Areas of Learning

The project was underpinned by an iterative approach in that each stage involved seeking, reflecting and incorporating feedback with the initial aim of constructing a final Key Capabilities document which was fit for its intended purpose. Key themes emerged during the development and embedding phases which will be discussed below.

In the earliest stages of consultation there were concerns about the use of the term 'child protection' in relation to student social workers and this was addressed explicitly in the Summary of the document. Meeting Key Capabilities does not qualify emerging social workers to undertake child protection investigations. This is rightly the domain of post qualifying, continuing professional development, the responsibility being shared by employers and qualified workers. Rather, should they need to engage with a child in the course of their practice; meeting Key Capabilities would ensure that they are prepared with the knowledge and the skills to do so.

Another message from the early consultation was that the skills of an emerging social work practitioner change over the course of their training. Consequently Key Capabilities were designed to reflect this. The document identifies that the way skills are taught and

assessed will be incremental and will correlate with the SCQF levels (7-10). The development of a professional is on a continuum, developing through each year of the qualifying programme and then throughout the years following on as a qualified social worker. The Continuous Learning Framework (2008) currently being developed reflects this concept of professional progression.

The 2004 Audit indicated that the SCQF levels at which students were taught and assessed in child care and protection varied across the universities. There were differences in when, and at what level assessed practice learning featured and whether practice learning as well as academic work was aligned with SCQF. There were variations within post graduate routes; the levels at which students were taught and assessed varied from level 8 to 11 SCQF, with different levels for academic and practice components in some universities. The potential implications of the different levels for service users and carers, was raised by employers and representatives of service users and is evident in the following SCQF level descriptors. At level 9 SCQF students are asked to "identify and analyse routine professional problems and issues" whereas Level 10 SCQF asks students to "offer professional level insights, interpretations and solutions to problems and issues." During consultation a message to emerge was that social



workers need to be able to analyse and offer solutions, as well as describe, if they are to make a difference to children's lives. The decision of the project reference group was to level the under and post graduate routes at Level 10 at the point of qualification. This meant that whichever route students chose to take, they would achieve a comparable level of knowledge and understanding in relation to child care and protection.

During their development one of the concerns expressed was that Key Capabilities could impact negatively on the nature of social work programmes. In Scotland qualifying programmes are generic and Key Capabilities sit within this context as one component of teaching and learning.

There was some anxiety that Key Capabilities could mean that other vulnerable groups might be marginalised within teaching and learning. Although the project was tasked to develop Key Capabilities for child care and protection it was mindful of the needs of other service user groups. The project took the view that all social work practitioners should take cognisance of the needs of other service users outwith their immediate area of practice. For instance, a worker within children's services should be aware of the needs of vulnerable adults and vice versa. The 4 Key Capabilities could be transferable and relevant to other service

user groups. A hope and anxiety expressed throughout the development and embedding of Key Capabilities was that a similar process would be undertaken for adult service users.

Some university representatives expressed the view that Key Capabilities would have a negative impact on their academic freedom to design, deliver and assess in innovative ways. While there was recognition that there were implications for service users and carers if students qualified with different skills and knowledge in relation to child care and protection, there was and remains some concern about centrally imposed curricula content. For some universities the timing of change was problematic given that they had recently developed their new degree programmes and had these approved by both their own internal processes and by the SSSC. When developing the document the aim was to achieve a balance between assuring a degree of consistency whilst allowing for flexibility. Therefore while there are some specific requirements, how a student demonstrates these will vary appropriately depending on their own needs and that of service users.

Practice teachers have highlighted that while flexibility can be positive, it can also present challenges. For example, some practice teachers work alongside more than one university. If each university utilises a different mechanism to assess



Key Capabilities, this could have implications for individual practice teachers and for achieving a degree of consistency. While there are practical implications for practice teachers in this respect, some variations can be expected given that Key Capabilities are designed to be flexible. The crucial factor is that any mechanism developed to assess or gather information in respect of Key Capabilities needs to accurately reflect both the wording and the principles of the document.

Key Capabilities requires students to undertake an assessment of a child or of parenting capacity during one of their practice learning opportunities. The document did not name specific types of assessment which would meet this requirement. This reflected the fact that children and parents have a range of different needs and there are a range of assessment frameworks currently in use in Scotland. The project did not want to limit the learning opportunities for students or the service offered to children and families by indicating that only one type of assessment would meet the requirements. The project also wanted to reflect that new methods of assessment and frameworks will continue to be developed and Key Capabilities needs to be able to incorporate these. For example, Scotland is working toward the implementation of the Integrated Assessment Framework as part of Getting it Right for Every Child (2005).

During phase one and the early stages of phase two there was some concern expressed as to whether there would be sufficient opportunities available to enable all students to undertake an assessment of a child or parenting capacity. In particular there were anxieties in relation to students who were entering their final year in September 2007. However, no formal feedback was received from the universities to the project or the SSSC to indicate that students have had difficulty meeting the requirements through a lack of appropriate learning opportunities.

The purpose of Key Capabilities was to improve services for children and young people and their families. Arising from the discussion in the initial workshops was a view that Key Capabilities might potentially be embedded in a way which was tokenistic or unethical. For example, there was a fear that the children of adult service users may be inundated with social work students repeatedly assessing their development and the parenting capacity of their carer. The responsibility for embedding Key Capabilities in a manner which is both meaningful and ethical belongs to the student, academic and practice teacher. They each have personal and professional responsibility in accordance with their professional codes of practice (SSSC 2003). Key Capabilities are part of this responsibility and as such the manner which they are met should reflect this. For example, in any practice



learning opportunity a student should only have contact with a service user, including children, where there is an identifiable need. Recent feedback from interviews and questionnaires indicate that practitioners, students and academics have taken Key Capabilities forward in an ethical and meaningful way and some of the earlier concerns have abated.

A number of those who commented referred to the timing of the implementation and gaps in information in the agencies where they worked. There are some key areas of learning from feedback about the dissemination and implementation process.

In June 2006 Peter Peacock, the then Minister for Education and Young People wrote to universities, the SSSC and SIESWE (now IRISS) to advise that Key Capabilities had been ratified by the then Scottish Executive and 'needed to be embedded now'.

In December 2006 the document was published and widely distributed, and the project reference group made a recommendation to the SSSC that the embedding process be integrated within all university programmes by the start of the 2007 academic year. In July 2007, the SSSC wrote to all key stakeholders including universities and employers to clarify the expectation of the SSSC that Key Capabilities would be embedded in qualifying social work programmes from September 2007.

The feedback from the surveys, the workshops, individual training events and interviews has highlighted that although there was communication from the Scottish government and the SSSC about the timescales involved, these letters did not necessarily filter through organisations. In addition, although the Key Capabilities document had been sent out in December 2006, in some instances the documents were not distributed widely across organisations or directed to the people who needed them both within universities and within practice settings.

There were a number of consequences:

The fact that key individuals within organisations did not have a copy of the document had the dual effect of raising anxiety about Key Capabilities and slowing down the process of implementation.

The intended focus of the workshops in September and October 2007 had been to bring together practice teachers and academics to explore how they might embed Key Capabilities, and to share experiences. However, because the document and information about timescales did not appear to have been disseminated, for some individuals the workshops were the first time they had read the document and learnt about the need to implement immediately. In anticipation of this the workshops began with an overview and information session. Overall, the feedback from the workshops



and from the questionnaires was that the workshops helped allay anxieties and affirmed their practice strengths. For some, the timescales outlined in the SSSC letter, and the difficulties in distribution of both the letter and hard copies of Key Capabilities, compounded the reservations they already had about Key Capabilities.

The workshops included both information and reflection on how Key Capabilities could be embedded, and it was helpful to have representatives from the SSSC at the workshops to answer specific questions about its role. Project officers identified a number of positives from the workshops. These included an enthusiasm from those present to meet the needs of children and their families, and willingness to share examples of their practice, and make links to Key Capabilities. The examples from practitioners and academics were later included on the Key Capabilities website.

In October 2007 a leaflet for service users and carers was developed, and this has been well received within the focus groups. In retrospect it would have been helpful had the project developed this at an earlier stage. The leaflet summarises the key points from the document, and could have been used as a useful adjunct to the full document for practitioners, academics and students as well as service users and carers and could have been an additional source of information. In addition, one of the messages to emerge from the focus

groups and recent feedback has been that while some service users may have been informed through universities service user group or by individual students and practice teachers there is scope for further dissemination of information about Key Capabilities. (See Appendix 11 for leaflet.)

One of the aims of the project was to identify and disseminate innovative methods of assessment of Key Capabilities. This was discussed with those consulted and considered during workshops. In some instances new assessments have been developed to enable students to evidence learning. However, it is apparent that there were already a range of existing ways to assess practice and that Key Capabilities have been integrated within these. In the most recent feedback many of those consulted reflected the fact that they were in the first stages of embedding Key Capabilities and students work was still in the process of being assessed. In addition several commented that Key Capabilities would develop and integrate organically and how they look now and in two years time would be different. One of the hopes and expectations expressed by those who gave feedback was that over time Key Capabilities would be fully integrated and as such would not to be addressed separately.

In December 2007 the project officers made a workshop pack available via the



website to enable individuals to disseminate information about Key Capabilities within their organisations. The project is aware that over time organisations have taken ownership of Key Capabilities and have held their own dissemination events. This is a positive development however, as Key Capabilities are integrated in both academic and practice settings it is envisaged that the need for events to disseminate and discuss will no longer be necessary.

## The Role of Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) in embedding Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection in the Social Work Degree

### Background

In December 2006 each university in Scotland delivering the social work degree received a copy of the Key Capabilities documentation and an accompanying letter from Karen Lax, Head of Education, Training and Workforce Development at Scottish Executive outlining the ministerial expectation that Key Capabilities would be embedded in the degree programmes from the start of the academic year (ie September 2007). The letter also outlined Scottish Social Services Council's role in supporting the embedding process and also in monitoring how effectively the Key Capabilities have been embedded.

In July 2007 Bryan Healy, Regulation and Practice Learning Manager at SSSC, wrote to all universities clarifying these expectations in the light of considerable confusion and concern about what was required. Final year student cohorts, with only one practice learning opportunity remaining, were considered by universities most likely to experience difficulties in meeting the requirements. The letter sought early advice from universities about anticipated or actual difficulties. A similar letter was sent to principal employers from Carole Wilkinson, Chief Executive of SSSC,



expressing her hope that they would continue to work collaboratively with universities to support students in meeting the Key Capabilities requirements.

### Activities

During the summer of 2007 SSSC co-hosted with IRISS a series of workshops across Scotland for employers and university representatives, designed to clarify expectations, allay concerns and provide good practice examples of how universities and employer partners were supporting students to meet Key Capabilities requirements. In spite of earlier concerns, the SSSC received no formal notification of any difficulties experienced by universities in providing appropriate learning opportunities to final year students in order for them to meet the Key Capabilities requirements, a testament to effective and creative solution finding by universities and employer partners.

A list of Frequently Asked Questions arising from the workshops, and appropriate answers were compiled and placed on the project website. Throughout its routine quality assurance and enhancement activities SSSC has utilised opportunities to promote the embedding of Key Capabilities, for example at workshops for external examiners of the social work degree held in London and Glasgow and in routine visits to universities. As part of their annual monitoring processes for the social

work degree, the SSSC will require evidence from each social work programme of successful embedding at appropriate levels and this requirement has been incorporated into the annual monitoring process.

As Key Stakeholders in the Change Academy for Social Work in Scotland, the SSSC will continue to support the dissemination of all of the Change Academy projects including that of the Robert Gordon University specifically related to embedding Key Capabilities and will continue to support the enhancement of the university/employer relationship in this context.



## Conclusion

In 2006, Investing in Children's Futures recognised that 'childhood is a special time and that childhood experiences can have a profound impact throughout our lives, influencing attitudes, physical and mental well being, life chances and life choices' (6: 2006).

In his foreword to Key Capabilities the Minister for Education and Young People stated:

*"Social workers have a key role in protecting our most vulnerable children. It is vital that the honours degree in social work properly equips them with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to deal with child care and child protection issues. Whilst individual social workers and employers have responsibilities for continuing professional development beyond the initial qualification, it is crucial that the degree should provide a solid foundation on which deeper knowledge and skills can be built. The Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection provide an important step forward."* (1: 2006)

The aim of Key Capabilities was to improve outcomes for children and their parents/carers by ensuring that at the point of qualifying all social workers could "demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to child care and protection" (3:2006) and were able to recognise their generic responsibility towards children.

It was evident when developing Key Capabilities that there were excellent existing examples of teaching and learning in relation to child care and protection in universities and practice learning opportunities and these informed the document. However, prior to Key Capabilities there was no consistent measure across Scotland of qualifying social work students' knowledge and skills in relation to child care and protection.

Key Capabilities asks universities and practice teachers to identify and measure a student's progress at key points, and in key areas of learning. Key Capabilities ensures that child care and protection is taught and assessed incrementally throughout social work programmes. Key Capabilities also asks students to consider the relevance of child care and protection, whatever the setting for practice.

Prior to Key Capabilities it would have been possible for a student to qualify without having undertaken an assessment of a child or of parenting capacity. Key Capabilities has introduced this as a requirement for all social work students, and this represents a significant change, and one which has been broadly welcomed, as the feedback indicates.

The changes required by Key Capabilities represented both a challenge and an opportunity for key stakeholders. While there were and remain some reservations



about the development and implementation of Key Capabilities, the overwhelming response has been positive. This has been evidenced by the enthusiastic contributions during their development, and the willingness of practitioners and academics to share examples of how they are embedding Key Capabilities.

Early indications after the first academic year show that Key Capabilities are making a positive contribution, with practitioners and academics commenting that they have broadened awareness of the needs of children and families and the responsibilities of all social workers towards children. As one practitioner commented *'[I am] very pleased about Key Capabilities as I previously had students who were of the view that they did not need to focus on children if pursuing adult work. Key Capabilities emphasises it's everyone's responsibility to make sure I'm alright'*.

Key Capabilities are a relatively recent development, and further research will require to be undertaken in future to ascertain whether Key Capabilities have contributed to a more rounded service delivery, and positive outcomes for children and their families.



## References

Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce*

Department of Health (2004) *The Ten Essential Shared Capabilities: A Framework for the Whole of the Mental Health Workforce*

O'Brien, S (2003) *Report of the Caleb Ness Inquiry, Edinburgh, Edinburgh and the Lothians Child Protection Committee*

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (2003) *An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework 2nd Edition*

Scottish Executive (2002) *"It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright" Report of the Child Protection Audit and Review, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive*

Scottish Executive (2003) *Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland: Standards in Social Work Education, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive*

Scottish Executive (2004) *Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive*

Scottish Executive (2004) *Protecting Children and Young People: The Charter, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive*

Scottish Executive (2005) *Getting it Right for Every Child, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive*

Scottish Executive (2006) *Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive*

Scottish Executive (2006) *National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce, Scottish Executive Response, Investing in Children's Futures, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive*

Scottish Social Services Council (2003) *Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers, Dundee, Scottish Social Services Council*



## Appendix 1

### Project Team

Project Manager - Linda Walker

Project Lead - Professor Brigid Daniel

Project Officers - Helen Whincup and Margaret Bruce

Administrative support - Stacey MacDonald

### Reference Group

Adrian Snowball (Chair) - Head of Learning & Development, Aberlour Child Care Trust

Joy Barlow - Head of STRADA

Jane Cantrell - Professional Officer, NHS Education for Scotland

Irene Cavanagh – ADSW Standards, Training and Research Standing Committee (latterly represented by Pam Linton, Training and Staffing Manager, Angus Council)

Robert Driscoll - Social Work Manager, Aberdeenshire Council (latterly represented by Neil Whettan, Employee Development Officer)

J Stewart Forsyth - Medical Director Designate, Ninewells Hospital

Karen Lax - Head of Education & Development, Social Work Services Policy Division (latterly represented by Billy Renfrew/David Purdie, Children, Young People and Social Care Directorate)

Linda Montgomery - Quality Improvement Officer, Falkirk Council Education Services (until 2006 only)

Bob Ovens - Deputy Chief Constable, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary representing ACPOS (latterly represented by DI Graeme Donald, Tayside Police)

Brian Smith - Learning and Development Advisor, SSSC (latterly represented by Brenda Gillies, Learning and Development Advisor, SSSC)

Frances Tran - Assistant Director Children's Services, NCH

Bryan Williams – Director, Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (now known as IRISS)



## Appendix 2

### Detailed Chronology

- 2004 The Child Care and Protection Training and Development Group established.
- 2004 audit undertaken of teaching and learning in relation to child care and protection in qualifying social work programmes in Scotland.
- May 2005 the work of the project taken forward by Centre for Child Care and Protection at University of Dundee.
- Summer 2005 consultation undertaken with universities providing qualifying social work programmes in Scotland.
- Autumn 2005 consultation undertaken with representatives from the then Scottish Executive, practice teaching, ADSW Child Protection sub group, SSSC, Who Cares? Scotland, voluntary organisations and practitioners completing post qualifying programmes.
- Autumn 2005/6 draft Key Capabilities developed and distributed to key stakeholders for comment and final draft sent to the then Scottish Executive.
- May/June 2006 Key Capabilities presented at 4 events bringing together universities and practice teachers to consider how to take them forward.
- 13th June 2006 Ministerial letter sent to all universities advising that Key Capabilities should now be embedded in qualifying social work programmes.
- September 2006 Key Capabilities presented to ISPCAN International Conference.
- December 2006 Key Capabilities published by Scottish Executive and distributed.
- April 2007- June 2008 second phase of Key Capabilities begins to track first year of embedding process and identify and circulate examples of implementation and assessment.
- April 2007 event commissioned by a local authority.
- April 2007 Key Capabilities in SSSC newsletter.
- June 2007 online survey carried out to establish a baseline of current activity in relation Key Capabilities.
- July 2007 letters sent by SSSC to key stakeholders confirming that Key Capabilities require to be embedded from September 2007 in social work qualifying programmes.
- August 2007 event held for practice teachers organised by practice learning network.
- September/October 2007 workshops to facilitate embedding held in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dundee and Stirling.



- October 2007 Key Capabilities website goes live.
- October 2007 leaflet for service users and carers developed and distributed for consultation.
- December 2007 workshop pack posted on website to enable interested parties to take forward their own workshops/ training events.
- January 2008 request met for specific input for students on qualifying programme, feedback from students also obtained.
- January 2008 Key Capabilities presented at PEPE International conference.
- March 2008 event for a learning network.
- Spring 2008 questionnaires sent to all those who had previously attended workshops to comment on process of embedding.
- Spring 2008 telephone or face to face interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives from all universities to establish views on embedding to date.
- May 2008 questionnaires distributed to students via Universities.
- May 2008 focus groups with service users and carers.
- May 2008 podcasts recorded by practice teacher and academic for website.
- July 2008 Final report.



## Appendix 3

### Key Capabilities Bibliography

Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, Crown Copyright

Black, A and Burgham, A (2003) *Child Review Report into the Life and Death of Carla Nicole Bone*, North East of Scotland Child Protection Committee

Butler-Sloss, E (1987) *Report of the Inquiry into Child Abuse in Cleveland 1989*, London, HMSO

Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Crown Copyright

Clyde, Lord (1992) *Inquiry into the Removal of Children from Orkney in February 1991*, Edinburgh, HMSO

Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce*

Department of Health (2001) *Studies informing Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*, London, The Stationery Office

Department of Health (2004) *The Ten Essential Shared Capabilities: A Framework for the Whole of the Mental Health Workforce*

Department of Health & Social Security (1974) *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Care and Supervision Provided in Relation to Maria Colwell*

Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996, Crown Copyright

Horwath, J and Shardlow, S (2003) *Making links across specialisms: understanding modern social work practice*, Lyme Regis, Russell House

Howe, D (1987) *An Introduction to Social Work Theory*, Aldershot, Gower

Knapman and Morrison (2005) *Making the Most of Supervision in Health and Social Care*, Brighton, Pavilion

Laming, Lord (2003), *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry*, Report presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for the Home Office, London, The Stationery Office

MacDonald, G and Winkley, A (2000) *What Works in Child Protection? - Summary*, Barnardos, Essex

Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Scotland Act, Crown Copyright

Morris K, Smith K (1995) *Child Protection Enquiries: Mothers Talk about their experiences*, NCH Action for Children, Family Rights Group, London

O'Brien, S (2003) *Report of the Caleb Ness Inquiry, Edinburgh*, Edinburgh and the Lothians Child Protection Committee

Reder, P; Duncan, S and Gray, M (1993) *Beyond Blame Child Abuse Tragedies Revisited*, Routledge, London

Reder, P, Duncan, S (2004) *'Making the Most of the Victoria Climbié report'*, *Child Abuse Review*, Vol 13, 95-114



Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (2003) *An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework 2nd Edition*

Scottish Executive (2002) *"It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright" Report of the Child Protection Audit and Review*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2003) *Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland: Standards in Social Work Education*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2003) *Getting Our Priorities Right: Good Practice Guidance for Working with Children and Families affected by Substance Misuse*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2004) *Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2004) *Protecting Children and Young People: The Charter*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2005) *Getting it Right for Every Child - Consultation Document*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2005) *21st Century Review of social work - Interim Report*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2006) *21st Century Review – Changing Lives*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

Scottish Office (1998) *Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility: Guidance on Interagency Cooperation*, Edinburgh, HMSO

Scottish Office (1999) *Looking after Children in Scotland: Good Parenting, Good Outcomes*, Edinburgh, The Scottish Office

Scottish Practice Learning Project (2006) *Standards and audit for practice learning opportunities: A quality process*, Dundee, Scottish Practice Learning Project

Scottish Social Services Council (2003) *Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers*, Dundee, Scottish Social Services Council

Scottish Social Services Council (2003) *Registration Rules*, Dundee, Scottish Social Services Council

Social Work Inspection Agency (2005) *An Inspection into the Care and Protection of Children in Eilean Siar*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*

Walker, AG (2005), *Introduction to handout selection – revised February 2003*, University of Dundee Conference: Investigative Interviewing of Children

Wilson, K and James, A, (2004) *Child Protection Handbook*, 2nd Edition, London, Balliere Tindall



## Appendix 4

### Summary of the Phase One Feedback from Key Stakeholders

Most universities were engaged in the consultation process. In relation to the 2004 audit, although there was general agreement with the content, some universities expressed the opinion that it did not adequately represent the complexity and variety of teaching currently being delivered at individual universities. One university did not feel that the audit accurately represented how they delivered their curricular content.

Particular themes were evident during consultation with universities, practice teachers, employers and service user representatives such as:

- What does the term child protection mean?
- When should it begin to feature in the degree programme?
- Anxiety that a focus on child protection should not be to the detriment of other areas of learning.
- Concern about the imposition of curricular content and the potential impact on the generic nature of the degree and programme design

Practice teachers and universities expressed the view that a further layer of

standards over and above the complex frameworks already in place would potentially cause difficulty. This confirmed the view of the project that Key Capabilities should map and complement existing frameworks.

The quality and nature of the discussions were extensive and informed the development of Key Capabilities. The aim of the project was that Key Capabilities should enhance and add to the learning and teaching which was already in place in respect of child care and protection. The examples which were contained within the document were drawn from practitioners and academics during the consultation process.

The final draft of Key Capabilities was sent to stakeholders for comment in autumn 2005, and thereafter was submitted to the then Scottish Executive.

In spring 2006 a series of workshops was held to enable key stakeholders to consider the document. The workshops were attended by representatives from all the universities delivering social work qualifying programmes in Scotland, and by representatives from the voluntary and statutory employing agencies. The aim of the workshops was to disseminate information about Key Capabilities and to be a forum to facilitate discussion as to how they might be taken forward within qualifying programmes both in practice and classroom settings.



In June 2006 the Scottish Executive ratified Key Capabilities and a ministerial letter was sent to universities advising that Key Capabilities had to be embedded into qualifying social work programmes in Scotland. The regulation of this would be carried out through the quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the SSSC.



## Appendix 5

### Online survey questions and answers, June 2007

#### What type of Organisation do you work for?

- Higher Education Institute
- Local Authority
- Social Services Learning Network
- Voluntary Organisation
- Scottish Executive
- Private Sector

#### What is your role within this organisation?

- Teaching Fellow/Lecturer
- Social Worker
- Senior Practitioner/Senior Social Worker
- Integrated Childrens Services Manager
- Social Work Inspector
- Practice Learning Development Officer
- Training Manager
- Director
- Project Manager
- Child Protection Training Facilitator
- PLO Co-ordinator
- Senior Manager
- Assistant Service Manager

#### Which Service User Group?

- Social work students
- Children and Families
- Generic
- Offenders
- Learning Disabilities and Mental Health
- Community Care
- Inter-agency
- Drug-using offenders
- Young people (11-16)

#### Have you read the Key Capabilities Document since publication?

- Yes – 72%
- No – 19%
- No answer – 8%

#### Have you and/or your Organisation started to implement the Key Capabilities?

- Yes – 47%
- No – 24%
- Don't Know – 18%
- No answer – 8%



#### If you answered yes to the previous question, what has been positive?

- In the curriculum ( BA Reflective Practice module) it has been a useful focus for the location of CP awareness.
- Meeting with practice teachers in community care and justice and helping them to understand the wider implications for families where children need protected and taking child protection out of the arena of only looking at situations where a child has been injured.
- It has reinforced the message that 'its everyone's responsibility'.
- The willingness for staff to learn.
- Heightened staff awareness.
- Our network is promoting any info on embedding the Key Capabilities.
- Seeing that programme materials support range of key capabilities - and where gaps are.
- Clearer focus on child assessment and protection.
- The integration between learning and practice.
- Practice Teachers are excited by the introduction of Key Capabilities, since we feel this will help guarantee more rounded practitioner colleagues in future. Those of us who are more experienced

are delighted to see what we feel is best practice in working with students is now formally recognised as such. We have generally sought to access such learning opportunities to provide a more generic experience and are accustomed to supporting each other's students with specialist guidance and knowledge where required.

- Difficult to say what has been "positive" since the Key Capabilities reflect what should be existing good practice.
- Students are actually asking for input on this.
- We are using Key Capabilities as performance standards - for example in our induction materials for new social workers.

#### What has been challenging?

- In practice learning to enable practice teachers and students to think laterally about opportunities and what it means.
- Knowing how and when Key Capabilities are being integrated into training programmes and practice in authorities.
- If I am honest - getting practice teams to realise that child protection takes many different forms, and valuing the role of others.
- Timescales.
- Implementing the changes due to lack of resources.



- Working with another set of standards creates additional complexity and sometimes bureaucracy.
- Implications for practice learning opportunities.
- The lack of knowledge and understanding of the issues by senior management.
- Dissemination of document to those responsible for delivering practice learning opportunities has been problematic. One issue concerned the published document being distributed to child care managers, rather than practice teachers. I myself had to access the final document through the website. I am organising a seminar for our practice teachers so we have the opportunity to explore the demands of Key Capabilities in more depth, and consider how we can support each other to ensure students have appropriate learning opportunities regardless of placement setting. Another concern is the focus on finding learning opportunities within the work belonging to an adult care team. We feel there could be ethical and values issues in seeking Key Capabilities learning opportunities where the service is involved with an adult; should such learning opportunities be tokenistic/exploitative of service users/carers, or should they be planned and delivered in order to provide genuine developmental opportunities for the

individual student in the first instance, learning they could then show they could apply appropriately in their main area of work? Child care and protection issues can arise naturalistically, but we do feel it is better to plan appropriate learning opportunities so that if/when such issues do arise, the student is in a better position to respond competently and confidently.

- Trying to reassure students that the Key Capabilities are not "another hoop" to jump through.
- Knowing how much input to give.
- Roll out to a large staff group - still working on this.

**If you answered 'no' please say why:**

- Unclear.
- Agenda'd report due for June Meeting.
- Haven't had time to evaluate/collate information or reality of required involvement/work.
- We are still looking at how to most effectively use it within workplace learning.
- Not a social work programme provider.
- As an Independent Practice Teacher I am not directly responsible for this and also have not been aware of this new emphasis.



**Will the website example facilities be helpful?**

- Yes – 42%
- No – 0%
- No answer – 58%

**Do you have easy access to a computer and the internet?**

- Yes – 39%
- No – 3%
- No answer – 58%

**Do you have any other suggestions as to how information can be shared?**

- Not everyone has access to computer/internet - some sort of newsletter to share things that others find helpful?
- The learning networks are happy to work jointly with the institute to help embed the Key Capabilities as this fits with our business plan objectives around employee and workforce development.
- Practitioners' fora.
- Using email to training sections who could then distribute it to relevant people rather than being flooded with non-relevant or too much information.
- Practice Teacher / University Tutor could meet to look at how information could be shared to enable it to reach more students.

- We will be contributing our Induction Pack to the learning network and have already started this process with SIESWE.

**Do you have any other comments you would like to add?**

- The organisation and roll out of the Key Capabilities is well done. Feedback from some of the students to date is that the Key Capabilities booklet is very accessible, easy to understand and well written.
- I am not clear that there is a wide enough knowledge of the introduction of Key Capabilities across practice areas and even amongst students. There is a feeling of it not being important enough to affect individuals which is not healthy.
- I am concerned about the presentation of Key Capabilities as additional to the Roles and Standards and think these could have been addressed as required ways to evidence existing areas of competence. I am also concerned that a "lazy" way of meeting them might be to simply learn existing procedural approaches to child "protection" without critically considering how damaging they currently are to many, many children and their families.
- Good Practice requires good staffing levels to achieve, it cannot be done where there are serious shortages.



## Appendix 6

### Feedback from national workshops.

These workshops were held in Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Stirling and Edinburgh. Exercises were based around an example from one of each of the four Key Capabilities and under each of these, groups were asked to consider:

- How might you embed this Key Capability?
- What might be the challenges and how can they be overcome?
- What do you want the outcomes to be for the service user?
- How might the student be assessed?

This exercise was used to facilitate discussion on Effective Communication:

*'Students should be able to communicate directly with children, young people and parents/carers using skills to elicit and impart relevant information. For example, responding to enquiries, taking and acting on referrals, talking to children in families they are working with. This includes accurate recording of information (knowing what to include and what to leave out.) This involves use of appropriate IT systems. Any recording should differentiate between fact and opinion. (Level 9, Page 11:2006)*

### Key themes and suggestions from these groups:

#### Embedding:

- Identify within teams relevant and clearly defined learning opportunities.
- Build in opportunities for direct work with families/children.
- Helpful to have statement from tutor prior to practice learning opportunities defining student's level of functioning and knowledge of children, young people and carers.
- Students spending time in reception/receiving services (first point of contact).
- Student attending area resource groups.
- Student using appropriate IT systems and case recording.
- Multi-agency working through induction and networking, participation in core group meetings.
- Ensure the student has knowledge of policy and procedures in terms of child care and protection in relation to their agency.



#### Challenges:

- Need to get beyond obvious or perceived limitations.
- Allaying student's anxieties about direct work.
- In some settings – links to other agencies will be needed. Overcome challenges using local learning networks, practice teacher forums and teaching teams can help.
- Creativity – making teams aware of Key Capabilities and their responsibility to move students forward on this area.

#### Service user outcomes:

- Service user involvement and feedback.
- Changes in culture e.g. ownership of childcare – not been limited to a particular team.
- Consistent and good experience of service.
- For service user at least as good, if not better than the service they would have received had they been seen by a permanent member of staff.

#### Assessment:

- Learning journey together.
- Direct observation including home visits.
- Written work and presentations.
- Verbal feedback from service users and other professionals.

- Use of IT system.
- Critical incident analysis.

This exercise was used to facilitate discussion on Knowledge and Understanding:

*Reder, Duncan and Gray highlighted that one feature which stood out of the 35 inquiries they reviewed was "flawed inter-agency communication" (1993, 60). In their practice learning opportunities and while at university students will be expected to demonstrate that they can translate effective inter-agency communication in to practice.'* (Level 9, page 23:2006)

### Key themes and suggestions from these groups:

#### Embedding:

Practice learning opportunities:

- Opportunity during induction to meet different agencies.
- Ask student to review relevant literature e.g. Getting Our Priorities Right.
- Undertake a skills inventory – what lies within the team and out with?
- Student to read inter-agency guidelines and child protection policies.
- Discussion within team as to who shares what information with whom (inter and intra agency).
- Use of supervision and careful case selection.



### Universities:

- Teaching on single shared assessment and joint teaching with students from other disciplines.
- Using role play e.g. agency training in child protection case conferences, peer group discussions.
- Discussion within student forums.
- Students need knowledge of legislation and policy and personal and professionals responsibilities and boundaries.
- Good inter-agency working.
- Need theoretical frameworks relevant to child development stages and ability to articulate this.

### Challenges:

- Institutionalised discrimination e.g. people not wanting to recognise issues of abuse for example with older people.
- Difficulty sometimes in hearing each other's perspectives.
- Challenges are helpful – they stretch people.
- Behavioural problems at school are not always seen as linked to attachment difficulties.
- Limited by resources and curriculum.
- All apparent opportunities may not be appropriate for the student.

- Negotiations with others e.g. out of agency which can raise accountability issues. Currency of link workers/supervisor knowledge in supporting students learning.
- Overcoming challenges – use of teaching/learning/training team approach.
- Expanding local knowledge about resources.
- Suggestion of learning networks starting negotiations across agencies.
- Restrictive organisational structures.
- Lack of practice opportunities.

### Outcomes for Service user:

- That they are seen in a holistic way. Client centred.
- Aim for service user empowerment, having a say/being listened to.
- Build in evaluation of how service users and carers experienced student intervention.
- Must be clear need for an assessment and no artificial creation of opportunities. Children not to be used for students to demonstrate competence.
- Engagement of service users in the process.



### Assessment:

- Within practice learning opportunities – observation, feedback from those who the student is in contact with, including service user feedback and agency colleagues.
- Within supervision consider how the student has prepared for a review.
- Reflective accounts, critical incident analysis, student presentations, peer group feedback.
- Need to know/document the extent of the student's learning/achievement to date and therefore can be clearer about selection of both practice learning opportunity and selection of work within that.
- Importance of information from 'learning to practice' being shared with practice teachers.
- Articulate presentation to colleagues.
- Ethical practice evidence.

This exercise was used to facilitate discussion on Professionally Competent and Confident:

*Students should be able to demonstrate to practice teachers and universities that they are clear about their professional role and responsibilities and when they need to share information with other professionals to protect a child. (Level 10, page 34:2006)*

### Key themes and suggestions from these groups:

#### Embedding:

- Practice teacher/link worker may need to draw on existing links with other teams.
- Give student opportunity to participate in duty services and reception.
- Universities can use practice studies, locate student in complimentary agencies i.e. health centres etc. Use of integration days.
- Use of case studies in university setting.
- In university and practice learning students should look at legislation, guidance and codes of practice.
- Need for good induction on practice learning opportunities.
- Opportunities for inter professional practice should be available.
- Consider university module content: community care, child care and protection, criminal justice, substance problems etc and involvement of stakeholders in teaching delivery.
- Student needs to conduct a holistic assessment and this could now have a child care focus.
- Most child care practice learning opportunities will present an opportunity to conduct a parenting assessment –



where this is not possible, the experience will have to be sourced from another agency. Challenges include the process of disclosure, but one solution is to set up that work early in the placement.

### Challenges:

- Practice teacher/link supervisor own knowledge base in child development.
- Sometimes links arise naturally but they can be difficult to plan. Care needs to be taken with confidentiality.
- Need to avoid “bolt- on” i.e. integration as a key part.
- Wider political and resources climate.
- Awareness of Key Capabilities – need discussion within training teams, improved communication from universities, training for practice teachers on Key Capabilities.
- Challenge for practice teachers if students are at different levels. Practice teachers need to be clear of the criteria at each level.
- Students’ confidence in understanding/finding role, ability to handle conflict, assert self. Link workers and practice teachers need to find balance between support/student autonomy.
- Can learning be transferable? E.g. adult experience in community care has validity for child care.

- Discussion about the definition of a child for the purposes of assessing Key Capabilities. This led to discussion about vulnerable adults.

### Service user outcomes:

- Ethical practice is vital – not using service users to meet the needs of students. Service users must not be negatively affected by this process.
- The service which is provided must be appropriate to the needs of the service user.
- Service user rights - there are limitations to sharing information.
- Service user and carers have confidence in student knowing what they are doing.
- Children’s Charter – “Think carefully about how you use information about us.”
- Improved knowledge, raised awareness of holistic assessment.
- Improved practice, protecting children.
- Services user informed about the social work role and duty and that of other professionals.
- Maintain centrality, individuality, and uniqueness.
- Empowered to manage own affairs.
- Gets best available service from all professions.



### Assessment:

- Use of supervision, observation of student, learning logs, case notes, student’s contribution to discussion groups, practice discussion using case scenarios.
- How does the student manage the process and their anxieties?
- Knowledge of roles and responsibilities.
- Quality of presentation.
- Needs to be linked to learning outcomes in portfolio.
- Reflective self assessment, feedback from other professionals.
- Existing assessments in universities incorporate inter professional principles in several modules.
- Students could complete a work summary about a child care setting where they demonstrated meeting the Key Capabilities.
- One university explained they had introduced an extra piece of assessed work as part of the students practice portfolio to demonstrate meeting Key Capabilities.
- Use SCOPT and Key Capabilities website to help students and practice teachers to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

This exercise was used to facilitate discussion on Values and Ethical practice:

*Students need to demonstrate that they are aware of their own personal values in relation to child care and protection and if necessary can separate these from their practice to ensure they respond professionally.*

*Students need to demonstrate that where there is a conflict between their personal and professional values, they can use supervision effectively to address this. (Level 10, page 44:2006)*

### Key themes and suggestions from these groups:

#### Embedding:

- Encourage students to discuss the issues that give them sleepless nights.
- In groups explore personal/professional boundaries e.g. issues of sexuality or an example like abortion to help tease out views and how this impacts on intervention.
- Use of DVD’s/TV programmes to help explore values and thresholds.
- Create safe environment, use of values exercise in groups, explore students perspective on what is “good enough.”
- Use of supervision including group supervision, asking students to reflect on learning style, peer learning, checking familiarity with social work codes of



practice. Awareness of Key Capabilities and access to the document. Practice teachers responsibilities to develop their own understanding.

- Group supervision including values exercise with child focus. Role play, case studies, shadowing and observation.
- Communication skills – how to communicate when people are challenging.
- Workshops on care versus control.

#### Challenges:

- Different thresholds e.g. neglect – levels of mess/too tidy.
- Views on legal/illegal activities e.g. own views on drug use or claiming benefit while working.
- Practitioners not certain about university teaching and input on values.
- Clarity about what is a social worker's role. The role of non qualified workers in child care and protection. The individual's perception of what kind of social worker they are.
- Creating meaningful opportunities. Implications for distance learning.
- Better preparation and support for practice teachers or might lose practice teachers who are not confident in child care and protection.

- Need to consider whether or not you need to go out-with own setting to arrange discreet pieces of work. We need to think about what is relevant and what our own placement offers.
- Danger of being unethical in considering situations for students.

#### Outcomes for service user:

- Happy and contented children.
- May need to distinguish between adult and child service user and their needs. E.g. discussion about fathers in prison and balancing the needs of all.
- Respect and genuine partnership.
- Service users and carers' rights are protected recognised and met. Choice for service users. Consistency/transparency.
- Acknowledge resilience of families.
- Valued and meaningful intervention.

#### Assessment:

- Use of reflective log, observation of student in group settings.
- At level 10 would want students to give informed and logical responses not only emotional/intuitive and students need to demonstrate that they are prepared to seek consultation.
- Supervision can model discussion of dilemmas.



- Agency/service user and peer feedback.
- Formative and summative coursework. Students demonstrate awareness of themselves.
- Reflective link to knowledge – how to resolve ethical dilemmas.
- Practice teachers need information about what has been covered regarding the Key Capabilities and what the expectation of them are in terms of their assessment and evidence.



## Appendix 7

### Feedback from interviews, Spring 2008

Participants were asked to reflect back on what their hopes and anxieties had been at the beginning of the consultation process and whether these had changed.

Some of the comments included:

- ‘Key Capabilities would bring a greater focus on the needs of children’.
- ‘In relation to practice learning opportunities - to enable students to meet Key Capabilities in a way which was meaningful and not tokenistic’.
- ‘That they would enhance what we are doing already’.
- One commented that it would help people to think about what it would be like for a child living with an adult service user.
- ‘Think they are very important – welcomed them’.

Their anxieties at the beginning of the process had been that:

- ‘Were they needed?’.
- ‘Need to balance generic learning needs of the student’.
- ‘A focus on children should not be at the expense of other service user groups’.

- ‘Would Key Capabilities make a difference?’.
- ‘Concern as to the extent to which people would sign up and whether they would see the relevance, as opposed to developing the resistance movement’.
- ‘That Key Capabilities would ‘chunk learning’, rather than child care and protection being woven through curriculum’.
- ‘Was and still am concerned that what seems to be happening is the introduction of a prescriptive specialist route within the main route. Concerned that this may impact on the generic nature of the programme and question what is appropriate at qualifying level’.
- ‘It would disadvantage students who were nearing completion, and had implications for curriculum which had already been through university and SSSC approval, but were now being changed’.

They were asked to reflect on what they thought had been the most positive outcome of Key Capabilities:

- Some linked this to the rationale for Key Capabilities saying that they had ‘raised awareness of why everyone needs to have a certain level of knowledge and skill’.
- ‘Feeling that it was relevant and achievable across a range of settings’



- ‘Getting practitioners and practice settings who wouldn’t normally look at child care and protection to think hard about constructive ways of working with and for children’.
- Others described how students had used Key Capabilities to reflect on their practice, and the quality of these reflections.
- Some commented that as they were still involved in evaluating students it was too early to identify positive outcomes.
- ‘Important that students recognise child protection responsibilities - wherever they go’.
- ‘Made programmes re-focus a bit on child care’.

They were asked about whether there had been specific challenges to overcome when embedding Key Capabilities including implications for those students who were just about to go on their final practice learning opportunities:

- ‘For this year, there was a small group of students for whom it was a bit of a challenge, and it raised anxieties for practice teachers and students’.
- ‘We were told about Key Capabilities’
- ‘One of the challenges is how good is good enough, and how complex does it have to be, but think this will improve as everyone has more experience’.

- A number of other people commented that it was ‘early days’ and that Key Capabilities needed time to ‘bed in’ and that this would be ‘an organic process’.
- Several commented that one of the challenges had been disseminating information about Key Capabilities as some people in practice and universities ‘hadn’t heard of them’.
- A concern was expressed that ‘unilateral change does not take in to account the complexity of programmes’.
- Although most of the feedback was that practice teachers had been very flexible and ensured that students had appropriate learning opportunities one person identified that ‘one of the issues around practice learning opportunities has been negotiation of specific pieces of work’ and there have been difficulties with ‘practice learning opportunities across boundaries’.
- There was some uncertainty from one of the interviewees as to ‘whether processes like assessment panels have got a measure of how to assess Key Capabilities’.
- ‘Working out how we do it without being tokenistic’.
- Levelling of practice learning opportunities could be problematic for example; a student may have the opportunity to operate at level 10 when they are in the level 9 setting.



- 'There was a panic that students might not get the learning they need in their final opportunity but it turned out ok'.
- One spoke about running workshops for practice teachers and a need for consistency between academics and practice teachers in a large staff group.

In terms of the challenges some commented that the document 'is complicated' and that there is 'a lack of clarity as to what constitutes an 'assessment' and as a consequence assessment may be interpreted differently by different practitioners and academics. Conversely, others commented that the document was 'too prescriptive'.

Several commented on the additional demands Key Capabilities had placed on academic staff, for example undertaking a 'mapping exercise ' to see where they were meeting them'.

One person commented that levels 7 and 8 had been more challenging than levels 9 and 10.

In order to meet Key Capabilities all social work students need to attain level 10 SCQF in practice and academic work. All interviewees were asked whether they had any comments regarding the levelling.

- One commented that the 'document is too prescriptive and it raises issues about what is taught and at what level. Programmes had been designed with a

rationale and had been approved academically and by SSSC'.

- Another commented that they 'thought the SCQF was a helpful framework' and that 'levelling was an art not a science'.
- Several commented that some students may be at one level, but meeting a higher level in some aspects.
- One person commented that ' a number of people are still not au fait with SCQF and that it is easy to make assumptions that people know about things' going on to note that ' Key Capabilities have helped people to look at SCQF and get to grips with it across the board'.
- One person commented that they disagreed with the post-graduate students being identified separately.
- One person stated that 'this has been a challenge – but think it is ok'.
- Another highlighted that it was difficult 'levelling at level 10 when our post graduate route is at level 11.'

Participants were asked whether service users and carers had been informed about Key Capabilities:

- One person commented that service users and carers had formed part of the programme management board which had discussed Key Capabilities and 'had helpful discussions'. They confirmed that once the leaflet for service users and carers has been through a process of



consultation and is in use they would find this helpful to access.

- Most of the interviewees assumed that if service users and carers had been informed about Key Capabilities then this would have been as part of their ongoing involvement in programmes or via students and practice teachers. Two interviewees indicated that as far as they were aware there had been no systematic updating of service users and carers in the practice and academic organisations in which they worked.
- One commented that 'service users have involvement in selection and programme management so will be picking up on Key Capabilities as part of that process.'
- Another said 'Service users were informed as part of service users and carers forum.'

Participants were asked to comment on the practice learning requirement 'able to evidence their knowledge and application of child care and protection as it is relevant to their setting' (6: 2006)

- 'Impressed as to how people had gone about it.'
- 'Students desire to do it properly – have I done enough?'
- One person commented that there could be 'quite a wide range of interpretation as to what relevant meant'.

- Another person commented that they 'felt that there was still an assumption that this would be done primarily in practice' and wanted to see more discussion prior to and after practice in universities.

There was support for this aspect of Key Capabilities and a number of people commented that it 'has contributed toward student learning.

One person commented that although Key Capabilities are at an early stage they 'would speculate that this has probably enriched learning and that the area of biggest challenge (and achievement) has been to embed this in areas which had not hitherto considered child care and protection'.

They were asked to comment on the fact that students' are required to undertake an assessment of a child or of parenting capacity' (6:2006):

- There was one comment that the wording of the document might contribute to the tendency of some practitioners to 'talk about assessing a child, rather than assessing a child's circumstances. Several commented that the different practitioners defined assessment in different ways.
- One person commented that for some students the concept of 'parenting capacity was more difficult to get hold of'.



- All those interviewed commented on the good will of practice teachers and the commitment they had shown to ensuring that students met this aspect of Key Capabilities.

Participants were asked to comment on implementing Key Capabilities in an ethical and meaningful way:

- Several of those interviewed reflected back on their early concerns and indicated that before the introduction they had been concerned that 'there might be false situations created' or that students might have been 'helicoptered in a non- meaningful and tokenistic way' and all were clear that any work with a child or family needed to be ' a legitimate piece of work' .
- One person commented that there was nothing in the document which would lead to unethical or tokenistic practice and said 'the document doesn't lead to that and is stronger than the standards (SISWE) in terms of anti- oppressive practice'.
- Several raised the role of the SSSC in monitoring this through their programme analysis, and the need for this to be robust.

Participants were asked to give any examples of how students had been assessed in relation to Key Capabilities:

- One person commented that different ways of assessing Key Capabilities

'hasn't been debated,- at the moment we're at the early stage of have they addressed it, rather than have we developed proper assessment mechanisms'. Another commented on the role learning networks had in sharing information.

- Several commented on the variety of ways students were assessed using role play, service users and carers, seminar groups, vignettes before going on placement and IT systems to help them think about 'what would you do if' questions.

They were asked 'What could the project have done differently?'

- 'Make more hard copies available'.
- Several drew attention to how helpful the workshops had been to allay anxiety and enable discussion with practitioners and academics, however one commented that the workshops could have been longer, so that there could have been more time and space to discuss, and drew on their experience of the Change Academy discussions.
- There was comment that the range of work undertaken by the project team had been 'fantastic and comprehensive and that what needs to happen now is to let it get embedded'.
- Several commented on the fact that not everyone who should have received a copy of Key Capabilities had done



before September, and that we should 'not make the assumption that people can access online resources'.

- A number of people commented that by the workshops in September/ October 2007 some people had not received and read the document, nor had they had sight of the letter from SSSC about the implementation timescale and that as a consequence ' anxiety levels were high'.
- There were a number of comments about the manner in which Key Capabilities were introduced, and the letter which was sent out in July 2007 from SSSC.
- Some commented on the timing of the Key Capabilities coming so soon after the development of the degree programmes, and the fact that at the early stages of the consultation that 'people hadn't realised that they would be a requirement'.
- There was some concern that the process of development and implementation 'felt very top down' and that the project 'can only involve people in discussion if there is time to do it'.
- Some remained opposed to the introduction of Key Capabilities, and one expressed concerns about the quality of the document describing it as 'a mixture of suggestion, and exhortation' and that links to intended learning outcomes could have been clearer.'

Participants were asked to identify their future hopes for Key Capabilities:

- The main hope of several of those interviewed was that Key Capabilities 'would become part of the everyday', that development would be 'organic' and that the crossovers with development and protection across the lifespan might be explored. Others expressed an anxiety that there would be 'a series of specialist mini programmes within the generic degree' and that this would undermine the generic nature of the programme'.
- Several expressed the hope that there would be some learning from the feelings people had when they thought things were 'being imposed'.
- There was also the suggestion that there be audio examples on the website to bring Key Capabilities alive and this has since happened.



## Appendix 8

### Feedback from questionnaire sent to stakeholders, Spring 2008.

They were asked what their hopes and concerns about Key Capabilities had been, and whether these had changes.

Comments included:

- ‘They have helped put the child at the centre’. I hoped they would ‘better equip qualifying social workers’.
- I was ‘anxious that it would perpetuate the notion that social work only values children’.
- ‘I hoped that they would help consolidate learning and provide a benchmark for practice’.
- ‘Practice teachers and employers have been positive but there has been resistance within the universities to take them forward’.
- ‘I was concerned about my knowledge and whether we could meet them, but workshops reduced anxiety’.
- ‘My concern had been that children and families teams would be swamped but that has not happened’.
- ‘My concerns are around the lack of integration into universities, I don’t think the universities have taken it on fully yet’.

- ‘I was concerned that there would be a further layer of standards’.

They were asked about the most positive outcome so far.

Comments included:

- ‘Practice teachers are sharing ideas about new ways of working, and there has been a move away from the singleton relationship’.
- ‘Students have been positive about Key Capabilities’.
- ‘Key Capabilities give educators a mandate for providing integration and joined up thinking’.
- ‘They have said child care and protection is everyone’s job, and that concerns about children cut across service user groups’.

They were asked about the challenges so far, and whether there had been any particular issues with this year’s final year students.

Comments included:

- ‘There were short timescales for introduction’.
- ‘Trying to make it happen when practice teachers are unsure about their role regarding new practice learning qualification’.
- ‘I work with different universities. All have proceeded in different ways. Some have



asked for cumbersome amounts of evidence, others have paid virtually no attention to it, which is worrying’.

- ‘Managing anxiety of students and tutors’.
- In terms of this years final year students the majority (16) said there had been ‘no problems’. One person commented that the ‘student had been ill- prepared’ and one other indicated that ‘it was hard for students to take on a new system at this stage’.

They were asked there had been any issues arising from the levelling of Key Capabilities.

- The vast majority said that there had been no issues (16).
- One person commented that they ‘found it helpful’.

They were asked whether service users and carers had been informed about Key Capabilities:

- Three people indicated that the student or practice teacher had advised individual service users.
- Several thought service users and carers may have been informed when they were being advised about child protection policies generally.
- Most thought that service users and carers were not aware of Key Capabilities and one person indicated

that they were ‘not sure all workers know about it, let alone anyone else’.

They were asked to comment on the requirement in relation to practice learning opportunities that ‘all students are required to evidence their knowledge and application of child care and protection as it is relevant to that setting’ (6: 2006)

Comments included;

- ‘It should be a vital part of professional practice at all times’.
- Several commented that it had ‘helped students to think about the specific needs of children whatever their placement setting’.
- One commented that ‘students seem to miss this regardless of our advice and concentrate on the assessment part.’
- A number gave examples of how students were meeting this, and the ways they were assessing it, including using supervision.

They were asked to comment about the requirement that during one practice learning opportunity students are required to ‘undertake an assessment of a child or parenting capacity’ (6: 2006).

Comments included:

- Several commented that it had supported a ‘more focussed approach’ and had ‘provided an extra layer of understanding among students’.



- One person commented that 'the workshop helped to allay my anxieties about how to provide opportunities in ways which were not contrived'.
- One commented that 'it created confusion as to whether Key Capabilities needed to be met in both practice learning opportunities'.
- One noted that 'It is not always easy, but I feel it is so important that it doesn't matter it is not always easy'.
- A number included practice examples.

They were asked to reflect on how Key Capabilities had been implemented in ways which are ethical and meaningful.

Comments included:

- 'There have been sensitive approaches by students and practice teachers'.
- A number commented that students would only be involved where there was a 'meaningful reason for intervention' and there had been 'real, not contrived situations' and that 'children were kept at the centre'.
- One commented that 'practice teachers need more support from universities to consider the placement and how best they can meet Key Capabilities'.

They were asked if they had any examples of assessment that they would like to share.

Comments included:

- 'A piece of work completed to help a child with visual impairment with the transition from primary to secondary school'.
- Some mentioned the different approaches taken by universities to identifying how Key Capabilities had been met. In one instance this was with the addition to profomas and statements from the practice teacher and student, in another it was by a short piece of writing by the student.
- Others mentioned the use of supervision, observed practice, and reflective logs.

They were asked if there was anything the project could have done differently to help the embedding process.

Comments included:

- 'The document is cumbersome and could have been streamlined'.
- 'Prepared the universities better'.
- 'Found workshops useful, and with hindsight wish I had encouraged more practice teachers to come'.
- 'Project helpful in allaying anxieties'.
- 'Have experienced difficulties using the website'.
- Several mentioned their hope that different universities could be more co-ordinated.



- 'Give clearer message to universities of what students require to know as many come to placement not knowing what they need to do to evidence Key Capabilities'.

They were asked about their future hopes and plans for Key Capabilities.

Comments included:

- 'I hope that this does not feel like an add on to some workers and that assessment of child/ child protection is a given'.
- 'That is seen in context of other policy developments eg GIRFEC'.
- 'That I become clearer as to expectations of students as use it'.
- 'Hope students and newly qualified workers will be better at keeping children safe whatever their work setting'.
- 'Very pleased about Key Capabilities as I previously had students who were of the view that they did not need to focus on children if pursuing adult work. Key Capabilities emphasises it's everyone's responsibility to make sure I'm alright'.



## Appendix 9

### Feedback from service user and carer focus groups

#### Edinburgh Group:

##### **Question 1 – Have you heard about, or had any information about Key Capabilities and if so, has this come from academics, social workers, students or websites?**

None of the group had heard of Key Capabilities. All thought they were a positive development and could see their relevance. They thought it was imperative that students have skills to communicate with, listen to, protect and identify the best interests of children and young people. None of the participants care for children or young people currently.

They were all very clear that the above skills should be transferable to other vulnerable groups.

##### **Question 2 – Are you/have you been involved in helping to assess students on the new degree in social work?**

One participant (SU1) was involved with social work students through video role play, promoting active listening and better communication skills although not currently in relation specifically to children and families. Could see the relevance of this and how Key Capabilities could be met through their work with students.

They also had visits from social work students to their own home to discuss self/own situation/past experiences. Could see how students could draw in Key Capabilities to these opportunities by asking 'what if' questions (what if SU1 had children; what if SU1 was a granddad; how might the children be/have been effected by his life?)

Another participant (SU2) had been involved with students visiting her at home. Again the 'what if' questions were explored, 'what if SU2 had a baby?'; 'what if SU2 had older children?' Also as SU2 was a young person, questions about her rights in supported accommodation and to be given an education etc could be explored.

##### **Question 3 and 4 – Have you had any contact up to now with students seeking to meet the Key Capabilities? If so, do you think the Key Capabilities have made a difference to the skills and knowledge of social work students in relation to child care and protection? If so, how?**

None of the participants had had any prior knowledge of the Key Capabilities.

##### **Question 5 – Are there areas where you think students could improve their knowledge and skills in relation to child care and protection? If so, how might Key Capabilities help?**



Key Capabilities were thought to help students' awareness – It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright.

##### **Question 6 – Do you think Key Capabilities might help students learn more about child care and protection?**

A focus on child care and protection is only important as long as the skills are seen as transferable to other vulnerable groups and individuals.

*'Seems like a lot of very good, detailed work'*

The group were very keen to offer possible scenarios to meet Key Capabilities. Here is one the carer shared.

##### **Possible Case Scenario:**

A carer whose husband has a brain injury is in a dilemma because their daughter is refusing to bring the grandchildren round to the house because of the behaviour of her husband. He is unpredictable and can get verbally aggressive, sometimes scaring the children.

Students might ask themselves:

- What rights the children might have in this situation? Are they of an age to choose?
- Is this a fair (for whom?), practical or reasonable?
- Is there any way to improve the situation?

#### Aberdeen Group:

The participant was a carer of a young teenager

##### **Question 1**

Not aware of Key Capabilities nor had they been discussed at any forum the participant had been at.

##### **Question 2**

Has spoken to groups of students re role as carer and experience of having been counselled over many years. Could easily see how Key Capabilities could be evidenced through much of this work eg active listening; clear communication etc.

##### **Question 3**

Had had a lot of contact with students who would be meeting Key Capabilities but is unaware that they are doing this as nothing has been labelled as Key Capabilities.

##### **Question 4**

Can't answer this specifically but feels, from own experience, that some of the newer social workers have more respect than older, more established ones.

##### **Question 5**

See above. Many established social workers have not worked in partnership with her; have been quite controlling of her and her child's situation, have been rigid and judgemental. Key Capabilities could help students be more respectful and user/carer focused.



However, this participant felt very strongly that Key Capabilities could work against real partnership due to fear by carers/parents of the emphasis in them being on the child. This could lead to a fear of greater judgement and the rights of carers (who she argued know the needs of their child) being diminished.

The greater the depth of knowledge, skill and emphasis on child protection, the greater the fear of some parents/carers who feel their child might be removed. If social workers take a holistic approach and are respectful, good listeners etc, then the Key Capabilities could help but not if applied by judgemental social workers/students.

This participant also felt that there was a danger of concentrating on children and families to the detriment of other vulnerable groups.

Also felt there was a danger in concentrating on things that can be measured rather than the things that are important – i.e. there being a focus on child care and protection rather than the preventative work which requires to be done prior to something getting to a crisis.



## Appendix 10

The Robert Gordon University put forward a team for the Change Academy Social Work Scotland (CA) with a project entitled, 'Evidence Based Practice in relation to Key Capabilities: embedding this in the curriculum'.

This had a focus on embedding Key Capabilities across all four social work programmes within the social work department in a co-ordinated way.

Recent work has included:

- 2 practitioner/learning network workshops which shared good practice and understanding regarding appropriate evidence to meet Key Capabilities.
- Questionnaires to students to gain evidence about their own and others' understanding of Key Capabilities.
- Planned staff workshop– to look at how to improve evidence informed approaches across their programme, using Key Capabilities as a vehicle.

The team aim to embed Key Capabilities by keeping a dialogue going with all key stakeholders, exploring the evidence that students produce to meet Key Capabilities and asking such questions as, is this good enough?, what might be missing?, what level might it be at?

Over time the evidence they gain will allow them to evaluate the success of their approach to embedding Key Capabilities and provide them with information about how to produce evidence about the inclusion of a wider range of curricular areas within their programmes.

The team will be presenting their findings at the JSWEC conference in July 2008 and producing a report as the final Change Academy output later in the year.

## Appendix 11

# Leaflet for people who use services and carers



### Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection

#### What are the Key Capabilities?

The Key Capabilities in Child Care and Protection (or Key Capabilities) are the minimum levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that social workers need to learn on their social work degree programmes to ensure that they can protect vulnerable children in our society. Students who are studying to become social workers must now show that they have met all of these Key Capabilities before they get their qualification.



#### Why do we need these Key Capabilities?

Over the past few years, there have been many changes to the way in which social workers are trained in Scotland. The biggest change has been the introduction of a new degree which means that social workers now have to study for four years before they become qualified.

Also, there have been some cases which were highlighted in the newspapers where children were not protected even though there were social workers visiting the house. In some cases, this happened because the social workers were there to help the adults and did not think it was their job to look out for the children.



These key capabilities were therefore introduced to make sure that the safety and protection of children became **everybody's business** and to make sure that every social worker, no matter who they were visiting, would be able to recognise any problems and to know it was their duty to do something about it.

### So what are the Capabilities?

There are four general areas which students have to demonstrate:

#### 1. Effective communication

To become an effective social worker, students need to be able to communicate with lots of different people (eg parents, children, colleagues, and other professionals) and in lots of different ways (eg conversations, written reports, presentations to case conferences) and in lots of different settings (eg in peoples homes, in the office, in Courts). Being able to talk to children of all ages is a key skill they need to learn.



#### 2. Knowledge and Understanding

Students need to have a minimum level of knowledge on lots of different subjects, for example, they need to understand different theories about how children develop, they need to understand the legal system in which they operate, they need to know and understand the procedures for dealing with a child who may be in danger and they need to understand how other professions work, such as health and the police. Social workers need to understand very clearly why and when they might intervene in a child's life to protect their safety.



### Professional Confidence and Competence

As well as being able to communicate and having the necessary knowledge, social workers need to have confidence in their abilities and to understand how other professions or services can also help. This may mean they have to decide when to involve other professions, such as health care or the police, in the best interests of the child even if others are pressuring them not to.

### 3. Values and Ethical Practice

Social workers need to understand the importance of and provide a quality service to all children, whatever their background or circumstances. They always have to focus on what is best for each child and work within the boundaries of the law and the organisations they are employed by which may, on occasions, conflict with their own beliefs.

#### How are these being measured?



Within Scotland, all qualifications have a 'level' within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). This simply means that in the first year of their degree, students are studying at Level 7, in the second they study at Level 8 and so on.

Within each of the four areas described above there are certain levels of understanding and skill that students must meet in each year and these will get slightly more difficult as the level or year increases. For example, in year 1 a student may only need to understand the general legal framework within which social work operates but by year 2 they may need a greater knowledge of specific pieces of law which relate to

children (for example the Childrens Hearing System). By the third year they may be required to apply their knowledge to a specific situation and by their final year they would be expected to have a thorough knowledge of the legal system and be able to use it in many different situations.

Social Work programmes at the Universities will be expected to assess each student to make sure that they have met all of the key capabilities before they do any direct work with people or before they qualify.

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the organisation which keeps a check on all the social work programmes to make sure that they are teaching the appropriate subjects to students and that the students are assessed at the correct level.



#### How are these being implemented?

All universities have been asked by the SSSC to implement these from Autumn 2007. A project has been set up by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) to help universities implement or 'embed' these in their programmes and the SSSC will make sure this has happened when they next review the university programmes.

#### Where can I read more about this?

There is a project website ([www.sieswe.org/keycapabilities](http://www.sieswe.org/keycapabilities)) where you can read more about the project and see some examples of how university teams (including agency staff) have begun to help students meet the key capabilities. You can also read some information from the SSSC on this website and you can read the actual document with all the key capabilities.



**Connected Learning • Effective Practice • Responsive Services**

Registered Office: 9 Dudhope Terrace Dundee DD3 6HG Scotland [T] +44 (0) 1382 224422 [F] +44 (0) 1382 224545 [W] [www.iriss.ac.uk](http://www.iriss.ac.uk)

Chief Executive: **Professor Bryan Williams** OBE • Company Secretary: **Karen Anderson** • Registered in Scotland No. 313740 • Scottish Charity No. SC037882