

SCOTTISH INSTITUTE
FOR EXCELLENCE IN
SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION



INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

Comprehensive Knowledge Review

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**Glasgow School of Social Work
University of Stirling
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with
University of Paisley
and the Open University**

ref. 3.1.6, 3.2.5, 3.3.5

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project teams would like to thank the workers, service users, carers, students, other professionals and agencies who have given time, skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to all the projects. The projects would not have been successful without them.

FURTHER DETAILS

This knowledge review provides a summary of each project. Reports have been submitted, by the projects, to the Institute at various stages along the way. These reports can be viewed at www.Institute.org by following the links to the individual projects.

The reports include:

- Literature review
- Practice Audit
- Demonstration Projects

These provide much more detail about each stage of the projects. Contact details of all the project workers are at the back of this report. We are happy to answer any queries you may have about the work and outcomes of the projects

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COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE REVIEW: INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

2. INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF PROJECTS

The overall aim of the Integrated Assessment Project is

- To develop innovative flexible and aligned assessment methods to promote deep learning for ethical and effective practice

The Integrated Assessment Project comprised of three projects with the following key objectives:

Project 3.1 New Methods of Assessment

- To evaluate current assessment practice, examining models from the UK and elsewhere, and , in the light of this evaluation, introduce and test a range of new assessment methods for use in the new social work honours degree

The project linked with South Lanarkshire Practice Learning Centre to design and implement the demonstration project

Project 3.2 Shared Assessment

- To explore and further develop a shared approach with other professions to the performance assessment of social work students

The project linked into two other projects by involving service users in both demonstrations and sharing one of them with the Opportunities for Inter-professional Learning project.

Project 3.3. Involvement of Users and Carers

- To explore a range of ways in which employers and people who use services and their carers can be involved in and contribute to the assessment process

In the early stages of the project, it was acknowledged that it would not be possible to consider user and carer involvement in assessment *in isolation from* other aspects of the learning process. The project has therefore taken a wider view of user and carer involvement in order to set a context for roles in assessment.

The project linked with a number of service user and carer organisations in the Tayforth area and across Scotland in working to develop networks at a local and national level.

2. KEY MESSAGES

New Methods of Assessment (3.1)

- Assessment tasks play a crucial role in determining what why and how students learn.
- There is a need for an assessment strategy which in addition to considering structures, procedures and processes, should provide a rationale for the different kinds of assessment tasks that students are required to undertake.
- Criteria for assessment should be made explicit for students
- Assessment strategies should be subject to ongoing evaluation

Shared Assessment (3.2)

- Other professionals and service users can assess interpersonal and joint working aspects of social work students' practice.
- Assessment guidance and clear criteria are required .
- The location of other professionals is an important factor in how much knowledge another professional will have about social work.
- Assessment cannot be isolated from teaching processes

Involvement of Users and Carers (3.3)

- The involvement of service users and carers needs to be integrated in all aspects of social work education
- Actively promoting and sustaining service user and carer participation is a process which takes time to develop effectively
- Preparation and support is a priority for all aspects of service user and carer' participation

3. METHODOLOGY

The three projects used a broadly similar methodology:

- a practice audit of current recent and planned arrangements in their field
- the establishment of a network of learning advisors
- a systematic review of the literature (3.1)
- a discussion of the findings of the practice audit and literature review with Universities and other stakeholders (3.1 and 3.2)
- a discussion of the findings of the practice audit and the advice emerging from learning advisors with Universities and other stakeholders (3.3)
- the drawing up of best practice protocols, guidelines and procedures (3.3)
- contribution to a comprehensive knowledge review
- participation in training for universities and stakeholders
- participation in project evaluation)

4. INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT PROJECTS

4.1 New Assessment Methods (project 3.1)

4.1.2 Outcomes of Literature review

Current themes in literature:

- Assessment can perform a number of functions including determining level of competence, grading of work, ascertaining readiness to practice or eligibility for registration. Assessment for such purposes often comes at the end of a programme of study or at the end of a module within a larger course of study, and is sometimes called 'summative' assessment.
- Another function of assessment is to provide feedback to students on their learning. This is sometimes called 'formative' feedback.
- Assessment tasks play a crucial role in determining what, why and how students learn. For the reason, in recent years there has been increasing recognition of the need to align learning and assessment tasks.
- The nature of assessment in higher education generally has changed considerably in recent decades, with less emphasis on written examinations and more emphasis on coursework assignments and on student participation in the assessment process (self and peer assessments).

The literature on student assessment in social work education revealed a wide range of methods. These included:

- Essays are a familiar task for students which involves them searching for information and developing a coherent argument which demonstrates their understanding of the issue. However, there is little demand for essay writing skills outside educational institutions, and while plagiarism has long been an issue in higher education the ease by which students are now able to purchase essays over the internet has greatly increased the potential for unscrupulous students to submit plagiarised work. One way around this maybe for essays to include some reflective component, e.g. of students reflecting on their learning.
- Examinations are seen to provide fewer opportunities for cheating and while there is typically a finite time for students to complete the task, written examinations come in a range of types and could involve students writing a number of essays or short answer questions or numerous multiple choice answers, and may or may not have access to other resources (e.g. notes or books) to assist them. Social work academics have often confined exams to assessing knowledge in subjects such as law, psychology or research methods, but as social workers often have to

- make decisions rapidly, there may well be some argument for using exams to assess practice skills, e.g. in assessment or crisis intervention.
- Short coursework assignments, provided the tasks are meaningful for students, can be less daunting than a single end of term assignment and provide prompt feedback to students as well as opportunities for collaboration between students.
 - 'Journals', 'learning logs' and 'reflective diaries' are seemingly interchangeable terms which describe a written assessment task for reflecting on learning, either in classroom settings or in agency based practice learning.
 - Observations of students are frequently used in the assessment of practice learning and can be used to provide both formative feedback as well as summative judgements.
 - Portfolios can be used to assess student learning when the evidence for learning is presented in several and potentially disparate ways. These have been used to demonstrate learning in classroom based modules such as group work and community organizing, in practice learning and over the whole course of a social work programme.
 - The ability to present an argument to experts or colleagues or to discuss ideas in a forum has resulted in suggestions that students be assessed on oral presentations rather than their ability to produce a written document. Another form of presentation, is of posters, which are a feature of many professional conferences.
 - While proposals can be the preparatory work for projects subsequently undertaken, development of a proposal can be a standalone piece of work which enables students to demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply a range of skills and theoretical knowledge in a professional task. Alternately, reports can be prepared about work already undertaken, especially research projects.

The methods of assessment selected may in part relate to who is performing the role of assessor. The traditional situation in higher education is that students submit work which is assessed by academics in the relevant discipline. However, the literature re assessing social work students reveals a number of other persons who may be involved in the assessment process. These include academics from other disciplines, practice teachers and service users. There are also numerous examples of students acting as assessors, either being required to make determinations and/or give feedback, on their own work or that of their peers. The guidelines of some higher education institutions may restrict the involvement of those not employed as academic staff members to formative feedback rather than determining final grades.

4.1.2. Outcomes of Practice Audit

Reviews of published literature potentially identify innovations or novel approaches to assessment rather than reflecting assessment practice more generally. Hence a practice audit was conducted to identify the range of assessment practices currently in use in qualifying programmes in social work education in Scotland. A second function of the practice audit was to identify innovative methods of assessment which do not yet appear in the published literature on assessment methods. Thirdly, the literature review seemed to place more emphasis on summative rather than formative assessment.

Details about methods of assessment, including any overall rationale or assessment strategy were sought from all nine higher education institutions providing social work qualifying programmes in Scotland. Information on methods of assessment sourced from the Universities was supplemented by information from West of Scotland Consortium for Education and Training in Social Work and from interviews with members of the Scottish Organisation for Practice Teachers (SCOPT).

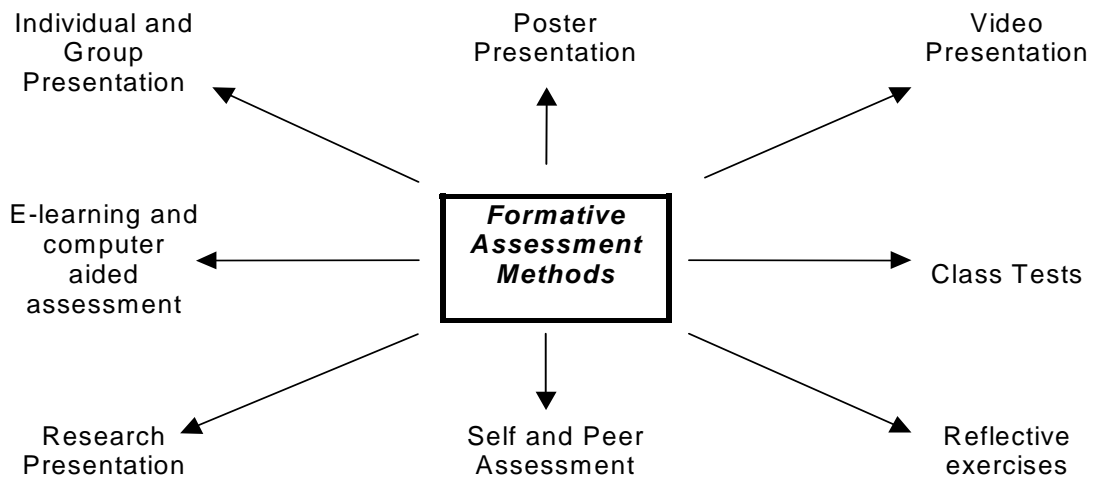
The practice audit found a range of practices in respect of formative assessment. Some programmes require students to undertake formative assessment tasks in order to fulfil module requirements, but these were not necessarily graded or contribute to the determination of final grades for the modules in which they were set. Formative feedback appears to be in the form of either verbal or written commentary.

The audit did not reveal an example of where formative assessments were graded. From the material available to the audit, it appears that there is a greater diversity of formative tasks, than summative tasks, employed in the assessment process. We suggest this may be related to the formal regulations of Universities with regard to summative assessment methods.

The different types of formative assessment methods used in Scottish Schools of Social Work are noted in Figure 1. The descriptions reflect those used by the various programme providers and it is possible that similar tasks have been reported differently by various programmes.

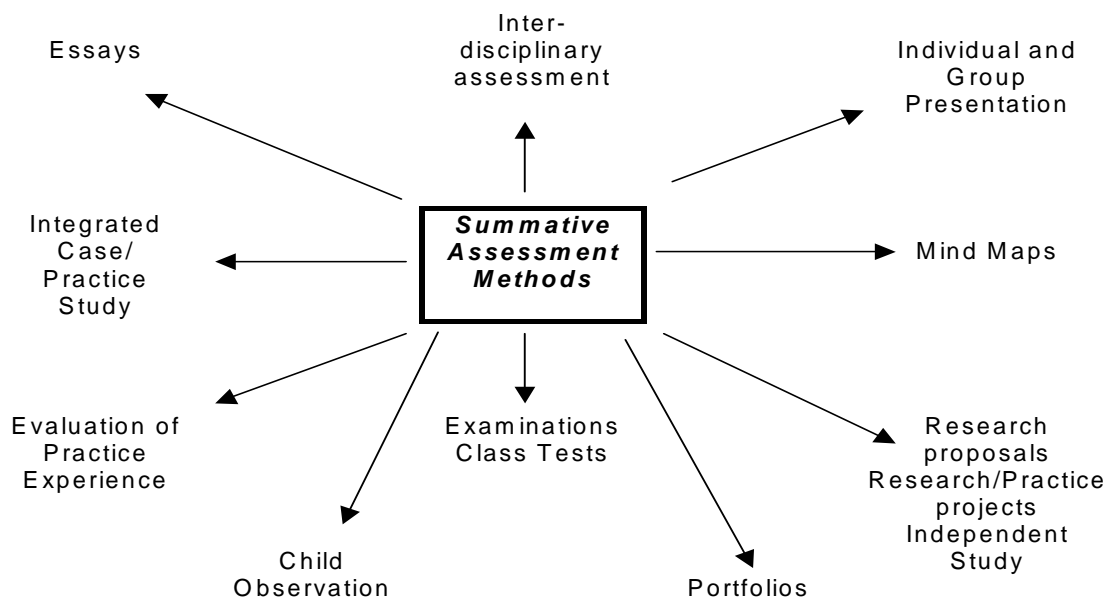
The practice audit also identified a range of methods used in summative assessment in Scottish social work programmes. Some methods were the same as those reported for formative assessment whereas other methods seem to be primarily associated with either, but not both, formative and summative assessment.

Figure 1. Formative Assessment Methods Used in Scottish Social Work Programmes



The different types of summative assessment methods used in Scottish Schools of Social Work are noted in Figure 2. Again, the descriptions reflect those used by the various programme providers and it is possible that similar tasks have been reported differently by various programmes

Figure 2. Summative Assessment Methods Used in Scottish Social Work Programmes



Practice examples of the various methods used for the formative and summative assessment of Scottish social work students can be found in the Practice Audit.

4.1.3. Outcomes from Demonstration Projects

Having reviewed the literature for information about possible assessment methods and ascertained what methods are being used in social work education in Scotland, the next stage of the project was to work on the development of a new mode of assessment for use in Scottish social work programmes. After consulting the project's reference group, a decision was made to trial a form of critical incident analysis as an assessment method.

Critical incident analyses are known to be used by some practice teachers as a tool for providing formative feedback to students undertaking practice learning in an agency setting. However we had uncovered little evidence of critical incident analyses being used for summative assessment of social work students in the UK. Overseas literature suggested that there might also be an application for critical incident analyses in the assessment of some classroom based units of learning. We were fortunate to be able to trial the use of critical incident analyses with a group of 10 postgraduate Fast track social work students undertaking practice learning at South Lanarkshire's Practice Learning Centre and with a class of new undergraduate students in the Glasgow School of Social Work who were taking the introductory subject 'Learning to Learn'.

Critical incidents were defined to the students in the following way:

Critical incidents are those which cause us to think and reflect, which leads to learning about ourselves or others (individuals and organisations) or about processes (e.g. about learning to be a social worker, the social work task or organizational policies and procedures). Most critical incidents are not at all dramatic or obvious but commonplace events that occur routinely in social work education and/or professional practice. What makes them 'critical' is that they've caused us to think and reflect at this particular time.

Proforma tool sheets were then developed for students in each of the trial settings, with five key headings:

1. Account of the incident
2. Initial responses to the incident
3. Issues and dilemmas highlighted by the incident
4. Learning
5. Outcomes

Dot points under each of these headings were tailored according to the students' particular learning objectives.

Student write-ups of critical incidents ranged from around 150 words by undergraduate students in Learning to Learn to essay length pieces by some of the postgraduate students in Practice Learning. As such, critical incident analyses could be used in summative assessment either as an element in a larger portfolio or as a discrete piece of assessment.

In both settings, we found students for whom critical incident analysis proved a useful tool in making sense of incidents which had emerged in learning situations. However, there are also many students who would choose other options over critical incident analyses if given a choice. This is understandable, given that the critical incident analysis frameworks we have developed ask students to consider more dimensions of an incident than is the case in some of the other reflective learning tasks presented in Learning to Learn or in practice learning. For this reason, we suspect some students perceive the task as more difficult. Yet conversely for other students, the degree of structure may result in critical incident analysis being perceived as more straightforward and with a clearer idea as to what the expectations of students might be. Use of a critical incident analysis framework may be further facilitated by making it available in a computer readable format.

4.1.4 Conclusion

When a range of assessment methods are being used across an educational programme, there is arguably a need for an assessment strategy, which in addition to considering structures, procedures and processes, should outline the different types of assessment to be used and rationale for use of these in every component of a student's course. Such documentation was not provided to us when conducting the practice audit.

Obviously, the content of modules and the learning objectives should guide the development of the assessment tasks. Also crucial is the stage at which the assessment task is set within the overall programme is also important and whether the students are undergraduates or postgraduates.

Once assessment tasks have been selected, it is important that criteria for assessment are made explicit prior to students beginning work on the assessment tasks. While the need to make criteria explicit may be obvious when peer or self assessment is to be utilized, all students should know how they are to be assessed.

Finally, an assessment strategy should include an evaluation component including scrutinisation of completed assessment tasks to determine whether

they actually were an effective and appropriate method of assessment. While external examiners undoubtedly have an important role with regards to scrutiny and evaluation of assessment processes, this does not remove the need for individual assessors to undertake their own evaluations of the assessment process.

4.2 Shared Assessment (project 3.2)

4.2.1 Outcomes of the literature review

- The preoccupation has been with the preparation and organisation of the teaching. Very little is written about assessment.
- The literature on shared assessment predominantly drew upon University based teaching.
- Shared assessment of practice is seen as more of a challenge due to the different assessment processes of professionals in training (Whittington 2003)
- Assessment cannot be looked at in isolation from the teaching upon which it is based. (Full literature review at www.sieswe.org)

4.2.3 Outcomes from the practice audit

All Scottish University Social Work courses were contacted and the four who had/have shared assessment were followed up by a telephone interview. Six other examples were gathered from England to increase the sample. The student numbers ranged from 40 to over 700.

The number of courses joining with social work programmes and having shared assessment varied from one to seventeen. Table 1 shows which professional groups were most involved. The following student groups appeared once: diagnostic imaging, secondary education, sports studies, speech and language, podiatry, paramedics, ophthalmic/prosthetics, social welfare and health sciences.

Shared assessment took place within three different types of teaching units:

- Explicit inter-professional learning
- Shared learning of common subject
- First year higher education general learning

Table 1 :Other professional groups involved in training with Social Work students

Professional student group	Number of courses
Nursing	6
Occupational Therapy	4
Physiotherapy	4
Radiography	2
Primary Education	2
Community Education	2
Dietetics	2

The Complexity of assessment processes grew as the number of participating courses increased. A range of assessments were used (Table 2). The existence of faculty wide marking schema was noted to be an advantage in standardising marking. Meetings for all teaching staff and markers to go over learning aims, marking criteria and standards were seen as essential.

Table 2 Type of Assessment

Method of assessment	No of Universities using the method
Presentation	1
Poster & oral	1
Essay-traditional academic	4
Reflective assignment	2
Essay based on case study	1
Exam	1

Differences between professional students groups may impact upon assessment as well as teaching. Social work students, on average, were older, had related work experience, more participative in groups and had a broader knowledge of societal issues.

4.2.4 Demonstration projects

4.2.4.1 Practice Learning

Coordinated by Anne Ritchie, lecturer at the University of Paisley, this was a joint demonstration with project 1:2, Opportunities for Inter-professional Learning.

It evaluates the contribution of other workers and professionals, as link workers, in the assessment of placements. The key questions are:

- Who is contributing to assessment?
- What do they wish to contribute?
- How do they wish to contribute?
- What are the issues for non social work qualified staff?
- What information and support do they need?
- How does their assessment compare with social work trained link workers?

The pilot took place in a multi-disciplinary setting with eight students. A further fourteen students are currently on placement and a final demonstration report will be available in July.

The pilot cohort had their first placement within Quarriers. These placements provide opportunities for collaborative practice as defined by Whittington (2003), including:

- Inter-professional teams - Youth Homelessness and Homeless Support Project; School Support Project
- Multi-disciplinary teams - Residential School, support projects for adults with complex needs
- Inter-agency collaborative practice - Housing, Health, Education, S.C.R.A., Voluntary Sector Agencies, Statutory Social Work Agencies, Psychological Services, Pastoral Services, Prison
- Collaborative practice with service users and carers
- Social Care Settings - staff from a range of professional disciplines
- Joint Training - Homelessness, Essential Lifestyle Planning
- Team-working

The primary responsibility for assessment of students was undertaken by practice teachers from a social work background. Given the assessment frameworks and requirements of the diploma in social work, it is difficult to imagine how other professionals would assess against required competences without substantial training and support.

Link supervisors came from health, education, community education or housing. Verbal and written contributions made by them to the summative and formative

assessments of students provided data relating to the views of other professionals about what is important when assessing competence to practice.

The link supervisors required additional training and support for their extended role to identify competence in relation to collaborative practice. Evidence indicators were developed to allow them to identify suitable learning opportunities. They had the continual support of the Quarriers dedicated practice teachers.

All reports included feedback from service users that had been collated by link supervisors and practice teachers.

Findings

Service users' feedback

- The focus was upon the students' ability to communicate effectively, to take their views into account, to see them as individual people and treat them with respect.
- Emphasis was not upon achieved outcomes but rather upon how they felt about working with the students and how the student made them feel about themselves.

Link Supervisors

- All rated highly the student's ability to develop and sustain effective working relationships with service users and to work in partnership with them.
- They drew on an appreciation of inter-personal skills and gave evidence of the range of skills in this area.
- Their contribution to assessment of these areas was very similar to that offered by the social work practice teachers. The professional background of the link supervisor seemed to make little difference to how they assessed these areas.
- Comments about the students' ability to work as a member of the team were varied but mostly related to the practical tasks undertaken by the students and their willingness to "chip in", rather than to the skills and knowledge which the student contributed.
- Comments about the students' abilities to work with other professionals demonstrated that students had become more aware of the roles,

responsibilities and priorities of other professionals, but there was limited comment about the practice skills involved.

- Those students in an inter-professional setting (3) did demonstrate a more sophisticated understanding of the tensions and challenges whilst achieving a more substantial range of skills in working with other professionals and managing conflict. They also had more detailed feedback available from a range of professional colleagues.
- Assessment of the students' ability to manage their time and workload reflected the comments made by the social work practice teachers.

4.2.4.2 Readiness to practice

Coordinated by Kathryn Mackay at the University of Stirling.

Outline of demonstration project

A videoed social work interview which assessed student's readiness to practice was marked by separate groups of ; nurses; occupational therapists (OTs); social workers;, teachers and two groups of service users.

The key questions were:

- what were the similarities and differences between and within the groups?
- How do groups take account of the level of performance at a particular stage of training, in this case readiness to practice?
- What support and information do people need if they are assessing social work students?

The participants attended focus groups which had three stages.

1) Individual assessment of student's performance as:

Poor Okay Good Very Good Excellent

2) Group discussion of the student's performance regarding:-

- Engaging with the person
- Listening to the person
- Speaking to the person
- Responding to cues from the person
- Explaining their role

Providing information
Demonstrating respect

3) Discussion about the task as a whole and participation in assessment of social work students.

Findings

Grading based on the assessment sheets

The grading sheets reveal differences around the overall rating of the student's performance (see table 3).

Table 3: Grading the student's performance per grouping

	Okay	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Nurses (2)		2		
OTs (6)	3	1	2	
Service users (12)	4	2	5	1
Social workers (2)		2		
Teachers (3)		1	2	
Total (25)	7	8	9	1

Written Feedback

Most groups picked up similar issues even though their actual grade varied. Teachers were the exception to this. There was greatest commonality between occupational therapists and social workers. It should be noted that the occupational therapists were all based within community care teams alongside social workers.

Service users came from two separate locations and projects. Written comments by the mental health service group (9) were brief in comparison to the group from the Institute project 3.3 (3).

Focus group discussions of the student's performance

- In general terms there was agreement by all groups about the student's ability to engage with the person and to show respect. However there were other areas such as listening, picking up on cues and how the interview ended that point to different perspectives between the groups.

- The teachers had less knowledge of what a social work interview might be and therefore did not pick up on several of the issues raised by the other groups.
- Nurses and occupational therapists have more exposure to social work and as such provided similar insights to the social workers on all aspects of the interview. The nurses felt they had less knowledge about social work education assessment processes. Here the issue of experience and setting come into play again.
- Service users provided very similar material to the social workers and occupational therapists. They often referred to their own experience of social workers and how the skills and attributes of each worker could affect them in positive or negative ways. They also used the benchmark of if the students had done any good.
- In relation to the level of assessment, participants were able to take on board that this student was at a beginning stage with guidance. Social workers felt that there should be more involvement of practice based workers at this point in training. Some services users felt this was a particularly critical point for them to be involved.
- Service users expressed a general wish to be involved and raised a number of suggestions about how they could do this e.g. joint or panel marking. Some were hesitant about the responsibility this might bring and suggested providing more informally.
- Clear guidance about the purpose of the assessment was noted as important by all groups. The service users in particular wanted to know the content of the teaching.
 - Although in principle the other professional groups were open to assessing social work students, obligations to their own students in training and time constraints were noted as limiting the scope to do this. This is supported by the problems experienced in recruitment for the focus groups.
 - The video exercise itself and the testing of readiness to practice was praised for allowing students to practice skills and to avoid them going out to real situations before they were ready.

4.2.5. Comparison between the two demonstration projects

Both projects have similar findings:-

- Other professionals can contribute to shared assessment re: **interpersonal skills, beginning assessment and joint working aspects of social work students' practice.**
- Guidance and clear criteria are required to ease the process.
- The location of other professionals is an important factor in how much knowledge another professional will have about social work.
- Time and the number of other professionals willing and able to assess social work students are key issues. This means shared assessment will have limits. This points very much to need to continue to take a pragmatic approach (Trevillion and Bedford 2003) to future work in this field.
- Service users offer a valuable perspective and give relevant feedback
- Methods of gaining service user feedback will vary according to the setting and the communication needs of the person.

4.2.6 Conclusion

The project sought the views of other professionals and services users regarding discrete aspects of social work training: assessment of interpersonal skills and collaborative working. This leaves large areas where shared assessment has not been tested. Many social work processes and tasks have unique legal, ethical and theoretical frameworks. Therefore the supervision and assessment of a student, we would argue, requires a qualified social worker and practice teacher. However this does not exclude the possibility for shared assessment by the many professionals, workers, service users and carers who contribute to the students' learning.

In relation to service user feedback there were differences between the demonstrations. The comments received from the practice learning demonstration pilot were more general and tended to comment on how the student made them feel. However the learning from the pilot has contributed to increased guidance about the nature of feedback for the demonstration proper. The final report (July 2005) will show whether this had an impact. Clearly there were differences in the nature of the involvement; it was in some ways easier in the readiness to practice demonstration where they had a defined task and the student was not known to them.

The project recommends an approach where, in the nature of collaborative working, as defined by Whittington (2003), both other professionals and people who use services can be involved in the assessment as well as the learning of students.

4. 3. Involvement of Service Users and Carers (project 3.3)

4. 3. 1. Outcomes of the Practice Audit

The audit is available on www.sieswe.org and in summary format, 'Involving Service Users and Carers in Social Work Education' from the Institute and University of Dundee, Department of Social Work.

Findings:

- Service user and carer perspectives about the skills, knowledge and personal qualities required by social workers recorded in this audit are reflected in the broader literature (cf. Crawford 2003)
- Service users and carers reported limited involvement in social work education. Concerning assessment, one group of service users felt they could give guidance and encouragement to students, but would not wish to be formally involved in their assessment, 'as service users would need confidence to put people right.' Another group suggested meeting face to face with students to talk about their experiences. One group indicated they knew very little about social worker training and therefore could not say how they could be involved in students' assessment.
- The distinction between service users and carers was not highlighted to any extent by respondents. Manthorpe (2000) suggests however that 'differences need to be acknowledged and valued' in order that social work training adequately reflects 'the complex status of carers' (p 26)
- There was limited participation of service users and carers reported in the governance of university social work programmes in Scotland, apart from The Open University (the School of Health and Social Welfare has a Service User Panel with a UK-wide remit) and the University of Dundee with its advisory group.
- All universities reported that service users and carers are involved in teaching. The Open University also referred to involvement in course production. Students emphasised the importance of service users and carers being directly involved in role-play, video work, lectures and presentations.

- Universities reported there was potential in programme assessment boards, practice panels, assessment of project work, group work, presentations, enquiry action learning (EAL) and assessing student practice in skills learning.
- Practice teachers most frequently seek feedback from one or two service users and carers in practice placements. Beresford and Croft (in Reynolds et al. 2003) underline the importance of choice for people regarding their involvement, but also indicate ethical issues around not involving people.
- Planning with service users and carers regarding feedback, looking at the format for feedback and considering the timing of feedback (in practice placements to maximise its impact on practice) are important issues to be explored.

4. 3. 2. Outcomes from the project

4. 3. 2. 1. Demonstration project

The demonstration project (available on www.sieswe.org) was developed at the University of Dundee and set up a system based on three core elements:

- a Service User and Carer Group, linked with the university
- a local network of service user and carer organisations
- a system of visits by lecturers to network organisations

Outcomes:

- The creation of a network of more than 40 user and carer organisations
- The creation of links, individual and collective, between University staff and local groups in ways that appear to be mutually beneficial
- A significant increase in the involvement of service users and carers through a range of teaching methods/approaches including direct teaching, videoed role play, practice placement feedback
- A greater appreciation by lecturers of the needs and experiences of carers and users which has direct implications for their teaching
- A greater understanding by users and carers of the social work task, and of the needs of other service user groups

- The creation of a significant level of *trust* between University staff and carer/user groups, reflecting a commitment to address issues of power and process

See also: Ager, Gee and Dow (2005)

4. 3. 2. 2. Pilot projects

A) Reflective Practice Skills I: video role play with young service users

The evaluation focused on the adequacy/appropriateness of preparation; strengths and weaknesses of the role play; the usefulness of feedback provided by the young person; overall comments on the exercise.

Learning points:

Clear information about purpose is essential for service users and carers, and students

Preparation for the videoed scenario: providing time and assistance is important for a successful outcome

Training in role play may reduce students' anxiety

Practical and ethical issues about involving service users and carers need to be addressed:

- Service user has 2 roles that of role play participant and observer
- Giving and receiving feedback is a skill that needs to be taught
- Role play may engage difficult feelings on the part of the service user

Feedback from service users and carers is one source of feedback alongside that of other students and lecturers

Good recording equipment and appropriate room setting are vital

B) Reflective Practice Skills II: video role play with service users and carers and joint assessment of videos

The evaluation focused on the preparation of service users and students for the task; the gains and shortcomings of role play; the process of giving feedback and general comments.

Learning points:

Feedback by service users and carers was generally regarded positively by all

Students felt more prepared for this second role play than the one earlier in the year as did service users. Learning to work in this way is a process that takes time

There remained anxieties, particularly that students did not feel they had enough knowledge, time or practice for the process. They need to consider more the nature of human problem-solving and processes of reflective practice

Preparation for service users and carers both for the video work and assessment was useful but could be improved

Overall the role play process with service users was felt helpful, natural, thought provoking and encouraged reflection by students.

A large number of those involved in the process found feedback from service users and carers over-positive. This suggests further training is needed

C) Service User and Carer Feedback in Placement Reports

This exercise looks at the extent and quality of user and carer feedback in placement reports in a sample from 2003 and 2004 at the University of Dundee. A requirement to include user and carer feedback was made in 2004. The exercise takes into account the preparation and guidance offered to students, practice teachers and service users and carers.

Learning points:

Feedback should be an integral part of practice – not just confined to student placements

Preparation for practice learning is an essential element for students, therefore requires to be robust:

- (1) in providing examples of tools for gathering feedback and
- (2) in understanding what constitutes constructive feedback

Preparation/ briefing of service users and carers is essential, regarding the expectations of the individual student, role of social work and social work training. Information needs to be accessible.

D) Service User and Carer Feedback on Students' Practice on Placement: a student group exercise

A small group of four students was set the task of gathering feedback from service users during their placement, followed by a presentation to their peers on the approaches used.

The exercise highlighted the following points:

- The need to be aware of the **context** in which service users and carers will 'assess' our practice:
 - As people who help
 - As social workers
 - As social work students
 - As an individual social work student
- **Asking service users and carers** how they want to complete the process of giving feedback is crucial.
- **Taking time** to explain the purpose of getting feedback is as important as the collecting of feedback.
- Use of plain English is a priority.
- What is **good feedback**? Students want 'positive' and 'negative' comments – to confirm good practice and build up confidence, and to get constructive criticism to learn from. Building up the self-esteem of students so that they can learn through hearing both the positive and negative comments is vital throughout the university programme.
- From the service user perspective, it may be difficult **to give feedback**. Helpful suggestions include:
 1. Looking at progress over the course of the placement e.g. when we first met..... now 3 months later.....what strengths, what difficulties?
 2. Looking at the goals set for work with the service user and looking specifically at each in turn and asking to what extent they've been met according to the service user
 3. Linking with the service user's views of what makes a good social worker
 4. Using a set of questions prepared in advance (see students' examples)
 5. Students suggest the service user speaks separately with the practice teacher, as well as with the student, to discuss the student's practice.
- **Core skills** are valued in social work practice e.g. listening skills, honesty and trustworthiness, consistency, sensitivity etc. It is important that these core skills are practiced and developed **over the whole programme**
- All the students had relevant feedback which could be included in their **final placement report**. Feedback from service users would be incorporated into work summaries or reflective practice and be part of the learning process.

- All the students had chosen to do this exercise during a **direct observation** with their practice teacher.

E) Enquiry and Action Learning (EAL) - Service Users and Carers Perspectives of Social Work

The EAL sequence involved a four week cycle of learning. It included an introductory session; preparation for visits; visits to individual service users and carers by students in groups of three; preparation for presentations; presentations.

Report in preparation

4. 3. 2. 3. Advisory network

The project's development of a national group of service users and carers has been in two stages:

Firstly, developmental work was done through focus groups in Glasgow, Perth, Inverness, and Aberdeen and through individual interviews, followed by two conferences in Glasgow and Perth (cf. Scottish Voices: Conference Report 2004). The conferences were a significant step in drawing service users, carers, university lecturers and organisations together to share experiences and to begin to work out how service users and carers might influence social work education at a national level.

Key messages from the conferences:

- There is great enthusiasm to be involved in working in social work education and it was seen that there was a variety of ways of increasing the involvement
- The initiative through these conferences to develop a national network was appreciated but there was a strong feeling that it must be linked with sustainable funding
- Involving service users and carers at a national level can be achieved through the evolving university networks as well as reaching out through existing user and carer networks/organisations
- Service user and carer involvement in social work education has implications for everyone involved. For service users and carers 'to take centre stage', universities need to listen and respond creatively and most importantly to learn to share power to let real service user and carer involvement begin to happen

- Teaching skills in ‘real listening’ should be a priority for social work education; as someone said, demonstrating “an ability to put her foot in my world”
- Clear communication using plain English and avoiding university jargon is very important for service users and carers. Presentations, meetings and all information should be easy to read and clearly understandable
- Ideas about how students could deepen their knowledge of issues facing service users and carers were suggested, including access to video diaries ; virtual learning; live-in social workers and students; and an emphasis on the value of residential practice learning opportunities

The report was disseminated in January 2005 and was linked to the next stage - the convening of a Short Life Working Group. This group was convened in February 2005 in partnership with the Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (the Institute) with specific funding for four meetings, looking at:

- Aims and objectives
- The proposed framework
- Membership
- Communication
- Resource issues
- Who might the group work with?

A consultation based on the group’s recommendations is planned and a report will be completed by the summer 2005. (‘Scottish Voices: Short Life Working Group – recommendations for a national group of influence’ 2005 (in preparation)).

4. 3. 2. 4. Best practice protocols

This document (available on www.sieswe.org) provides a series of protocols for universities to promote the involvement of service users and carers in social work education. It draws on work undertaken by the project as well as making links with other institutions, literature and research findings in the UK.

Protocols address principles of involvement; participation; teaching and learning; practice learning; student assessment; governance; payment for involvement. Each protocol is accompanied by a set of practice points and links to further information.

4. 3. 2. 5. Conclusion

The developing service user movement 'emphasises the importance of models of participation that are based on human rights, equalities, inclusion and the social model of disability' (Levin 2004, p 9). The related social work literature reflects a complex debate about the 'language of participation' (Braye p 9 in Kemshall and Littlechild, 2000) and draws distinctions between a consumerist model of participation on the one hand and a democratic model on the other (Beresford and Croft, 1993). What emerges across the literature is a broad framework of principles which form the basis of good practice. In terms of the impact users and carers may have in effecting change, Beresford and Croft report:

'the constant message from service user organisations is that there is no more effective way of changing practice and service culture than through involving service users in training (and)extend(ing) systematically through all aspects of training from providing direct input in professional and in-service training to being involved in developing course curricula, providing course materials and evaluating and assessing courses' (in Reynolds et al 2003, p 24).

5. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE THREE PROJECTS

The projects have explored a range of assessments which could be developed to improve the fit between the today's climate in social work and the training students receive.

Assessment is a complex and integral part of teaching and learning. It is hard and potentially hazardous to address assessment as a discrete part of the course. There is a need for an overall assessment strategy to provide a rationale for the type of assessments being used, their relevance to the learning and whether other professionals, carers and users are to be involved. Any assessment requires explicit guidance and criteria for students and markers. Assessment strategies should be subject to ongoing evaluation.

Service users and carers do have a contribution to make to assessment but also more broadly in terms of teaching and other course processes. They offer a unique perspective due to being on the receiving end of social workers' interventions. Any involvement of service users and carers needs to be planned jointly with them, with guidance and support built in.

Similarly, other professionals can contribute to assessment of certain aspects of practice but the context and setting will influence how aware they are of day to

day social work practice. There will be limits on what they can assess and how much time they can offer, over and above commitments to their own work and professional training.

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