

## **National Group of Influence of Service Users and Carers in Social Work Education**

### **Findings from the Consultation:**

1. There is consistent support for and interest in the proposal to establish a national group of service users and carers to influence social work education at a strategic and Scotland - wide level. There is clear support to move forward with the proposal and build on the momentum that has been established.
2. There is general support for the mission statement, aims and objectives as laid out in the consultation. These aims could be revised to reflect both the range of settings in which social work education occurs and social work codes of practices and standards.
3. In addition to developing new ideas and initiatives, there is an identified role for a national group in sharing good practice in service user and carer involvement in social work education across Scotland.
4. In establishing a national group, clear and strong links will need to be made at local, regional and national level. The joint work between the short life working group and the Scottish Practice Learning Practice is a constructive example on which to build.
5. There are opportunities to explore joint working with the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability based on its work with the Service Users and Carers Panel of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Work Review Group. The national group might also make links to the Scottish Social Services Council's service user and carer members of the Approval Panels for the new social work degree.
6. A national group should find ways of increasing participation over a wider range of service user and carer groups and ensuring that those who are most socially excluded are able to participate. The group should, for example, find ways to involve children and young people, offenders, homeless citizens, involuntary users of social work services, people who misuse substances and people who communicate in a variety of different ways. Further consideration is required to ensure that both the similar and different needs of carers and service users are given due weight.
7. Further attention needs to be given to how service users and carers will be supported to participate in a national group. In general, funding for the on-going support and development of the group remains unclear. A number of offers of support for funding and services in kind for the national group were made in the consultation responses. These need to be reviewed and followed-up.

8. Several organizations identified a range of activities for joint work with the national group. A clear policy for commissioned work undertaken by the group is therefore required. The national group will need to negotiate and clarify roles, remits, accountability, consultancy fees, costs and expenses.

### **Recommendations of the Short Term Working Group:**

1. A national group should be established with the mission stated in the consultation.
2. The Short Term Working Group wants to be sure that the national group is led by the service users and carers themselves and has real influence in the area of social work education. To do this, the group needs to look in more detail at some aspects of its proposed structure - particularly its location and funding needs. The group wants to make sure that its decisions on these matters are fully informed by current social work policy developments - particularly the current development of Learning Networks and the outcome of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Work Review, due in early 2006). The group therefore recommends that:
  - (i) The group should have further discussions with the Scottish Practice Learning Project to explore the potential relationship between a national group of service users and carers and the strategies being developed by the Learning Networks to involve service users and carers.
  - (ii) The group should find out more about the scope of the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability's work in relation to the involvement of service users and carers in social work more broadly (ie. not just social work education). The group may learn from the Consortium's model and/or develop links.
  - (iii) The group should be hosted temporarily by the Institute so that these discussions can take place before final decisions about the future of the national group are made.