

THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES WORKFORCE IN SCOTLAND: A PLAN FOR ACTION 2005-2010

“Has Scotland got the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time?”

This was the question raised by the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, when he launched the National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005-2010 on 9 November 2005, committing almost £17 million to make sure this happens.

Mr Brown stated that:

“You – the social service workforce – are charged with delivering a wide range of services, day in, day out. We have an ambitious vision for the social service workforce. A workforce that is competent to respond to changing needs, confident it makes a difference to people’s lives and valued for the contribution it makes to Scottish society”

This vision for the social service workforce is a challenging one. It needs to be as the people of Scotland want a workforce which is able to respond to their changing needs and can make a lasting difference to their lives. People who use services and carers need to know that the workforce has the right skills and knowledge to respond to their needs and is capable of delivering the kinds of services they want and deserve.

The strategy is for everyone with an interest in the social service sector. It sets out what is already happening, as well as what needs to be done to achieve a competent, confident and valued workforce. For this to happen it is vital to have a sector which prides itself on embracing lifelong learning for life changing work - work which is carried out on a daily basis, making a real difference to people’s lives. It is also crucial that everyone working in the sector does their best to make sure this does happen. Investing in training and development must be integral to how we plan and deliver services. To succeed, the strategy depends on everyone involved taking forward the relevant actions and playing their part.

With the recent publication of “Changing Lives: Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review on 7 February 2006, much of the implementation of the Strategy will be delivered in conjunction with the implementation of the Review, as there is a clear overlap.

In order to provide quality services in the social services it is vital that organisations give priority to identifying and developing managers who are skilled in leadership. Effective managers, at all levels, are needed to ensure the key messages of the strategy are implemented. Offering joint leadership and management training to managers from different professions and services will help close the gap between policies and practice and improve jointly delivered services.

The Leading to Deliver programme is an excellent example of how this is being tackled. The programme is geared to build the capacity and capability of first line and middle managers working in local authorities and the independent sector. It equips them with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the challenges of service delivery in a changing policy context, particularly the challenges of leading and delivering services in multi-professional teams and across other organisational areas such as health, education, housing and justice.

There is no room for complacency as the social service world is one that is rapidly changing. The reality is that everyone working within this field needs to be highly flexible and adaptable. Services are increasingly joined up with those working in health, housing, education, and criminal justice.

The strategy also emphasises that there is a need to think differently about how the workforce is trained and developed. Organisations must show commitment at all levels. Increasing the opportunities for joint training will help to ensure those charged with delivering services understand the part they have to play and what the contribution of others is to ensuring that effective, integrated services are delivered.

The strategy's message is obvious – it involves having a clear vision, being realistic about the challenges ahead and inspiring and supporting staff to deliver results for service users and carers. Staff should share this goal, contribute to the development of themselves and others, and feel valued and supported.

The recently launched 21st Century Social Work Review report entitled “Changing Lives” takes a fundamental look at all aspects of social work and makes 13 high level and forward thinking recommendations on how services should be developed to meet the future needs of Scotland's people. Leadership and management feature strongly throughout and one of its aims is to ensure that social work services develop enabling leadership and effective management at all levels and across the system.

The strategy has taken account of both the 21st Century Review and the Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce. Both these Reviews will have implications for what the Executive expects of the social service workforce including how we recruit, develop and support it. We believe the strategy provides an excellent platform from which to build the competent, confident and valued workforce needed for the 21st century. The Executive is currently examining how to raise awareness of the strategy and its implementation, and information on this will be forthcoming within the next few months.

The **National Strategy** report is available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/11/07104403/44040>

The **Overview** document:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/11/07103926/39271>

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The **Changing Lives** report is available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/02/02094408/0>,

The **Summary** report is available:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publicatons/2006/02/02094718/0>.

The **Executive's Response** is available at

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/02/06103323/0>.