



36 Glenlee Avenue
Edinburgh
EH8 7HQ
07810854165

info@cambiumadvocacy.co.uk
www.cambiumadvocacy.co.uk

A Summary of Policy and Research Reports between 2005 – 2011 relating to the Children’s Workforce

**Prepared by Cambium Advocacy for the Looked After Children Implementation Group
Workforce Hub**

May 2011

1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarise what a range of research and policy reports written between 2005 and 2011 say about the values, knowledge and skills required for an effective children's workforce. It is written on the basis that the identified values shape the skills and knowledge required of the workforce in a changing context. The report also summarises identified gaps in skills and knowledge as well as in the research.

The aim of the report is to enable the workforce hub of the Looked After Children's Strategic Implementation Group (LACSIG) to identify relevant work streams for the coming year, ensuring that the priorities for implementation reflect what is set out in policy statements and current research/evidence.

The information in this paper is drawn from eight key reports and from different elements of the Getting it Right for Every Child programme. Each of these reports is briefly summarised in Appendix 1.

2 Values, Skills and Knowledge for an Effective Children's Workforce

Values and context

The evidence suggests the effectiveness of the children's workforce is dependent both on the values underpinning their work and on the context workers operate in. In *Getting it Right for Every Child (Girfec)* values are described as underpinning principles that have broad application across relevant agencies.

Specifically Girfec states:

'Successful evolution in culture, systems and practices across diverse agencies may depend partly upon a shared philosophy and value base.'

A key value set out in Girfec is:

"... the building of a competent workforce to promote children and young people's well being: committed to continual individual learning and development and improvement of inter-professional practice"

The *21st Century Social Work Review (SWR)* argued that an increasing emphasis on **the personalisation of care will require greater integration of services and devolved decision making to the 'front line'**. This will require a greater mix of skills among front line staff.

Similarly, in *Joining the Dots (JtD)* it was argued that integration and cooperation between the children's workforce, children, families and the wider community should be central and that this too would require the development of specific skills, such as interpersonal, leadership and communications skills.

In the early years there is an emphasis on shifting the balance of care, from a resource intensive crisis intervention approach to a focus on early intervention and prevention which creates its own skills demands.

Evidence also suggests that since 2005 the children's workforce faces significant challenges as the context in which it works changes. For example an increasing number of children and young people are being looked after. Their needs are described as increasingly complex, with mental health and substance misuse in particular being seen as growing issues. In relation to residential child care for example it was noted that:

'... children and young people have complex needs which require specialist support and high level skills from the staff who care for them. These different factors are putting substantial pressures on residential child care services.'(Home Truths)

There is then a clear set of values which in themselves require a workforce that is increasingly qualified, knowledgeable, skilled, experienced and motivated. Specific values such as those that seek to ensure that care is personalised, children are at the centre of decision making, and services are integrated all pose challenges for developing an effective workforce. At the same time a changing and increasingly challenging context will place more demands on the knowledge and skills required of the workforce.

It should be noted that it is also argued that foster and kinship carers should be very much seen as part of the workforce with learning needs and the points below are intended to apply to them where relevant.

3 Delivering on Values: Required Knowledge and Skills

The reports highlight various skills required of the general children's workforce to deliver quality care within the value system and changing context outlined above. Additionally, specific skills are identified for elements of the workforce. These are explored below.

Personalisation of care and devolving autonomy

Increasingly complex children's needs, along with the personalisation agenda, leads the evidence to identify a need to devolve greater levels of decision making and responsibility to front-line staff. This would require that front-line staff and staff teams develop both generalist and specialist skills to create and implement care plans appropriate to the child.

To do this a range of skills are suggested as being central.

- **Soft skills** - interacting with families and the wider community and other workers and agencies to coordinate care requires interpersonal, leadership and communications skills. The reports suggest a lack of soft skills is apparent among some workers. Literacy and numeracy skills were also identified as relevant for some staff.
- Identifying complex needs and sourcing appropriate support requires a level of awareness across a range of areas such as nutrition, mental health, drug/alcohol dependency, advocacy, physical education and general education. This leads to suggestions for a **higher level of academic qualification** and, in particular, the *NRCCI Workforce Report* (NRCCI) suggested that by 2014 all new workers entering the residential childcare workforce would hold, or be working towards, a relevant SCQF level 9 qualification.
- It was also argued that increased autonomy would require greater mix of skills in teams with appropriate specialist skills in areas such as mental health.

To help workers make decisions on complex issues based on evidence it was suggested that a **national system of evidence** showing what works should be developed with access for all workers.

Many workers will need to be supported in taking on this greater level of autonomy supported by 'accountability frameworks'. However, a lack of managerial support for this was identified as a key concern in the *Sector Skills Assessment* which leads to suggestions for greater **support and mentoring training for managers** and supervisors. It was also suggested that managers need to be encouraged to 'let go' of an increasingly autonomous and skilled workforce (JtD).

To deliver this, and more general leadership in the sector, it is argued **managers in the residential childcare sector should be degree qualified** (or work-based equivalent). Indeed it was stated in

SSA that from 2011 the SSSC will require managers of day care children's services to hold a Childhood Practice degree level award, and that this will become a requirement for all child and early years managers in the future.

Putting the child at the centre of integrated services

The evidence since 2005 is clear that putting children at the centre of services, while understanding and taking into account their views, contributes to creating good quality integrated services that fully meet their needs. As noted in *Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care*,

'Every looked after child should have a multi-agency child plan which commits universal and specific services to meet the needs of the child. Children's views must be listened to and taken into account in these plans'.

The aim of *Girfec* to have a single system of assessment, with access to one record and a single plan for each child, leads the evidence to conclude there is a need for **training in care planning for some staff**. Facilitating children's input in such a plan also requires **soft skills** such as active listening along with a **knowledge of children's rights**.

A single system of assessment will require staff to work across agencies, while making the child central to care may require workers' engagement with the wider community. In 2005 it was noted there was a need to develop workforce skills in relation to **working with other organisations and working in equal partnership** to 'engage and empower' children, their families and wider communities(NSDSW). This continued to be raised as a skills need in 2010 (SSA).

As mentioned above other soft skills are required to help such inter-agency working and wider family/community engagement.

A culture of learning and development to deliver specific skills

The reports identify a central place for a '*culture of learning*' based on CPD, reflective learning, putting learning into practice, and linking personal development to rewards.

The *21st Century Social Work Review* (SWR) in 2006 found two thirds of respondents felt there was no culture of learning in their work places.

It is argued that creating a culture of learning and development is reliant on effective management and leadership and that CPD should be written into managers' and supervisors' objectives. **Managers need to be properly trained and experienced to support staff in their own CPD and reflective learning, helping them put that learning into practice.** Managers need to ensure there is both time and a structure to facilitate and support staff in their personal development. Managerial skills are required to encourage staff to reflect upon practice, put what they learn into practice, acquire relevant professional skills and further develop their ability to make judgements in complex situations, providing staff with access to professional consultation, support and advice. The Continuous Learning Framework(CLF) offers a tool for use by staff and managers to develop their skills of managing relationships and managing themselves

In the context of a supportive environment **staff should be responsible for their own CPD** and create a personal development plan. Resources should be available to ensure they can draw up and implement such a plan.

There was also a need identified to ensure that general social workers' skills matched the demands of their current posts and a suggestion for a '*portfolio of competence*' to ensure this was the case

(SWR). In addition there was a need for CPD to be linked to maintaining registration with the SSSC.

It was further argued that **CPD should be linked to a system of value and rewards**. In order to keep workers at the front line and enable them to gain and pass on experience to newer staff it was felt a career path at the front line was required.

Induction was also seen as central to ensuring that the values underpinning the service could be communicated. *'Structured and standardised induction processes'* were seen as *'a vehicle through which existing good practice can be identified and owned by the whole team.'* (NRCCI). While this should be delivered to all new staff in any unit it should be particularly intensive in the first year of work in the sector to support staff taking on greater responsibilities.

The NRCCI report called for 'robust schemes' in the workplace to ensure staff acquired the required levels of qualification for their posts, while the SSA recommended **training for staff in the use of technology** to develop their own CPD and to utilise the online tools available for social service staff.

Home Truths called for core qualifications which provide staff with the right skills and knowledge to meet the demands of residential care, with the long term aim to introduce a stepped approach to higher levels of qualifications.

In 2005 the *National Strategy for the Development of Social Services* highlighted the potential of the SCQF to ensure that learners could transfer credit from programme to programme and gain credit for informal or work-based learning with a recommendation that:

"Scotland's colleges of further and higher education, as well as universities and other training providers should use the SCQF to its fullest extent."

SSA found a 20% skills gap in social services in 2009. This was mainly in teamwork and planning skills. Other reports raised Health and Safety training and care planning as specific issues.

An educated workforce

Much of the evidence suggests a need for greater interaction between practice, FE and HE sectors to **ensure the needs of practice are reflected in education**. It was argued that the personalisation agenda, for example, must be reflected in education as it will create new roles and require new skills for the workforce including,

'...stronger therapeutic skills which have been identified as of paramount importance in achieving positive outcomes. For others, it may involve supporting and advocacy roles. The implications of these changes will need to be considered, understood and reflected in initial and post registration education for social workers.' (SWR)

The role of the social pedagogy model was highlighted in two reports in particular. The NRCCI report suggested that the model captures the essential elements of residential childcare (holistic and child centric), while *Moving Forward* points to social pedagogy's emphasis on integrated working.

Several reports called for the need for integration of services to be reflected in learning practices and in pre-qualification education. It was felt that this could help breakdown perceived silos. While *Joining the Dots* recognised that work was under way to create more integrated training and education, it was argued that this *'work needs to be greatly accelerated and the pace and scale of change should be considerably more radical than we have seen to date.'*

It was argued that a '*transitional phase*', expressed through a shifting value base and moves towards changes such as early intervention, requires **greater cooperation between, practice and education**. Several reports called for the Scottish Government to work together with the other sectors to identify and address such gaps thrown up by new approaches and systems.

There were specific calls for regular review of supervisor and manager courses in particular to ensure they reflect such changing need.

4 Barriers to Developing the Workforce

Several barriers were noted to the development of a more knowledgeable and skilled workforce.

The NRCCI report noted that **residential care staff had less status than colleagues elsewhere**. These staff tended to be less qualified with less access to CPD. This was reflected in relatively poor terms and conditions. This, it is argued, leads to less motivated staff and poor staff retention which in turn impacts negatively on the quality of the workforce. The report went on to argue this limited the ability of staff to interact on an equal footing with other workers across the sector and therefore diminished the quality of service on offer.

Therefore to increase retention of front line staff in general, and residential care staff in particular, there is a need to have **better developed CPD plans and support, greater levels of qualifications** and have these reflected in rewards. In addition the availability of career paths at the front line were needed to retain staff at this level.

“The training and education of the residential child care workforce is as an important lever to improve the quality of the sector. Since 2000, there has been a strategic emphasis on developing a qualified workforce in residential child care in Scotland. While many staff are undertaking qualifications, 68% staff in 2007 were still unqualified” (Home Truths)

Joining the Dots noted there was **a tendency to develop 'silos' across the workforce** and the only examples of 'real partnerships' in the early year's workforce were localised and based upon good local leadership. It argued there was a need to foster a '*culture of partnership working*' based on an appropriate system of rewards. One specific suggestion was to get professionals working together during training and education to prevent silo being created in the first place.

5 Future Needs

Predictions for a growing social services workforce, within the context of a relatively old workforce, mean that the supply of staff in some parts of the children's workforce is likely to become increasingly problematic as demand for experienced staff increases while older staff retire. With an ageing population the SSA predicted the children's workforce will become a smaller proportion of a workforce increasingly focussed on the elderly. Difficulties may therefore arise in terms of training, recruitment and retention due to competition for staff and resources. Within that context the issues outlined above with identified front-line careers paths, relative terms and conditions, status and CPD will likely become more important.

The SSA also noted that the re-tendering of social services in general will have an impact due to the growth in small private and voluntary organisation providing services who may not have access to sufficient resources to ensure their staff are adequately skilled.

It was noted in the context of public spending plans that constraints on resources, set against no indication of falling demand, will mean that efficient delivery of services is more important than ever to improve the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.

Projections for a changing ethnic mix within the population will be reflected in the ethnic mix of looked after children and the children's workforce. This may require greater language and cultural diversity training. Additionally consideration needs to be given to how this change in the population impacts on the recruitment of carers/staff that can meet the needs of children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

6 Gaps

A range of issues were raised in the reports regarding gaps in research and in services that have a direct impact on and relevance to the values, knowledge and skills required for an effective children's workforce. The main ones are listed below.

- The split of the workforce across the public, private and voluntary sectors limits information about the skills and experience of that workforce.
- Limited information about the size and nature of the workforce more generally undermines predictions on how well the workforce will meet demand (SSA).
- There is little information or analysis in the identified reports about international comparators.
- The reports suggested a lack of centrally collected and locally accessible evidence on good practice and examples of 'what works'.
- There is no national strategy to lead and support service development for looked after children, and the level of service varies with little or no mental health provision targeted at looked after children in some areas.
- Not all young people in residential child care have access to advocacy services, particularly where children and young people are disabled.
- It is unclear how children's rights are being monitored and implemented while young people are in residential care.
- Existing specialist provision does not always meet the demand for services working with children and young people with mental health or behavioural problems.
- Investment in a central training resource for foster carers is essential to create more opportunities for them to participate in training and to gain qualifications.

7 Summary of Key Messages

Changing values in relation to the personalisation of care, putting the child at the centre of care and shifting the balance of care in the early years, were seen as the drivers to changes in practice and the required skills, knowledge and experience of workers.

Along with the increasingly complex needs of children, this demands increased autonomy for front-line staff, greater integration of services, and cooperation across the workforce, family and wider community. This in turn brings an increased need for a range and mix of skills – both generalist and specialist in staff and staff teams. It also requires greater focus on soft skills such as communications, leadership and interpersonal.

Workers need to be supported in developing such skills and managers need to provide this support and develop the framework for doing so. Managers therefore need trained in support and mentoring, and leadership and should be degree qualified (or equivalent).

Increasingly complex demands require a higher level of qualification. The *NRCCI* suggested that by 2014 all workers in the residential childcare sector would hold, or be working towards, a relevant SCQF level 9 qualification.

A single system of assessment requires training in care planning for some staff. Facilitating children's input in such a plan also requires soft skills and knowledge of children's rights.

CPD, reflective learning, and linking personal development to rewards are central to developing the workforce. Robust schemes, a supportive environment, portfolios of competence and staff responsibility for their own CPD were all needed to ensure required qualifications were achieved, skills and experience were developed and staff were motivated and retained.

The requirements of practice must be reflected in education. The personalisation and integration agendas, for example, must be reflected in education as they will create new roles and require new skills. The Scottish Government should work with the other sectors to identify and address such need.

To tackle 'silos' within the workforce there was a need to foster a '*culture of partnership working*' based on an appropriate system of rewards. One specific suggestion was to get professionals working together during training and education to prevent silos being created in the first place.

The *NRCCI* noted residential care staff had relatively low status, tended to be less qualified with less access to CPD and had relatively poor terms and conditions. This led to poor retention and limited staff development.

Demographic changes may mean the supply of staff in some parts of the children's workforce will become increasingly problematic. Difficulties are likely to arise in terms of training, recruitment and retention due to competition for staff and resources. The context of public spending reductions may magnify such difficulties.

Re-tendering of services may have an impact on staff development and retention.

Projections for a changing ethnic mix of looked after children will bring training requirements and more proactive recruitment policies to ensure an adequate ethnic mix within the workforce.

A range of gaps were highlighted in research and in services and are listed in section 6.

Appendix 1 - Identified reports summary

2005

National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005 – 2010

The strategy set out a plan for the development of the social service workforce between 2005 and 2010. The basis of the strategy was a vision of a workforce that was “competent, confident and valued”. Recruitment, changing attitudes to learning and offering learning and development opportunities at every level were the “positive solutions” sought to the challenges faced by the social service workforce.

The strategy links the recruitment and retention of staff with the need to ensure that the workforce was qualified, staff are able to work in an integrated way and have the knowledge and skills to give users and carers more control over how services are delivered. At the same time it acknowledged that there were shortages in the workforce that needed to be addressed.

Higher Aspirations, Brighter Futures: NRCCI Workforce Report

This report, focussed on residential care, argued that, as the needs of the child should determine the mix of skills, experience, and qualifications of the staff team and, as the needs were becoming increasingly complex, there was a need for increasingly qualified staff. The report highlighted barriers to meeting this need. It noted disparities in terms and conditions and status of staff, a lack of integration across the sector. The report put forward a series of recommendations aimed at tackling these barriers and increasing the quality of staff and aiding retention in order to help deliver a high quality service.

2006

Changing Lives: 21st Century Social Work Review

This paper by Review Group, and published by the Scottish Executive, found that the drivers for change include the increasing complexity of need along with the expectations on corporate parenting. It argued that personalisation of care should be central and this required a greater level and mix of skills at the front line, devolved decision making, and a increasing focus on CPD and reflective learning. It found that this should be delivered through a national evidence base, a framework for supporting CPD, improved qualifications, and better terms and conditions for front-line staff in order to aid retention.

It also argued there should be greater links between education and practice and that there was a need to identify and plug the gaps in education to enable the delivery of a service based on core values. It highlighted a lack of evidence showing that there was a systematic approach to link workforce skills to organisational needs.

2008

Getting It Right for Every Child

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is a national approach to supporting and working with all children and young people in Scotland. It is aimed at all services for children and adult services where children are involved. Based on research, evidence and best practice and designed to ensure all parents, carers and professionals work effectively together to give children and young people the best start in life.

It requires that all services for children and young people - social work, health, education, police, housing and voluntary organisations - adapt and streamline their systems and practices to improve how they work together to support children and young people, including strengthening information sharing.

The GIRFEC approach is designed to help those facing the greatest social or health inequalities and earlier intervention by professionals to avoid crisis situations at a later date.

Home Truths: Residential Childcare in Scotland

A paper produced by the Scottish Institute for Residential Childcare which looks at the current context for residential childcare in Scotland outlining the main challenges and priorities for residential childcare services. The paper highlights the increasing numbers of children and young people who are looked after since 2000, the mix of providers and the views of children and young people on their experiences of residential care. The quality of services is a central element of the paper. It outlines specific elements which stand out as being particularly important which, in relation to workforce, includes “a positive culture, ethos and morale both within the residential home itself and among professionals and the wider community” and “effective leadership of residential units and staff with a range of skills and competencies”

The Early Years Framework

A joint publication from the Scottish Government and the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) which seeks to provide a Framework to “maximise positive opportunities for children to get the start in life that will provide a strong platform for the future success of Scotland”. Central to the Framework is the desire to see a shift from intervening only when a crisis happens, to prevention and early intervention. Early years is defined as from pre-birth until 8 years old.

2009

Moving Forward in Kinship and Foster Care

A report from the ‘Getting it right for every child in foster and kinship care’ reference group. It examines in detail recruitment, assessment and training of foster carers; proposes an assessment framework for working with kinship carers and highlights best practice in supporting children and their carers. The report contains an analysis of the impact of an ageing population and the increasing numbers of looked after children placed in the community rather than residential care. It contains a vision for the kinship and foster care and makes a series of recommendations including the need for foster carers to be trained, valued and included in the children's workforce.

2010

Skills for Care and Development, Sector Skills Assessment (Scotland)

The report covered the drivers for skills demand in social service, the required skills to meet such demand and predictions for future needs. Value-based drivers such as personalisation of care along with political drivers such as re-tendering and changing public expectations created the need for better qualified and skilled workers supported by a framework of CPD. It argued that substantial investment was required in order to help the sector deliver and retain a quality workforce now and in the future.

2011

‘Joining the Dots’: A Better Start for Scotland’s Children

This independent review by Prof Susan Deacon focussed on the early years sector this report argued there was sufficient evidence already about what works and that attention should be paid to putting that into practice. It noted that the need for integration was hampered by the ongoing existence of 'silos' across the workforce and that this was entrenched by separation of professionals during their education. It noted that ongoing efforts to develop new core skills and training required to be more radical and that the pace for rolling this out accelerated.