RESOURCE GUIDE No 2

# Involving service users and carers in social work education

Social Care Institute for Excellence

Better knowledge for better practice

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# Involving service users and carers in social work education

*Enid Levin*

SCIE
Social Care Institute for Excellence
Better knowledge for better practice

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- The heads of social work education programmes and academic staff in the universities and colleges that responded to our survey, organised meetings with their service user and carer partners, and provided information, advice and examples of their work.
- The members of service user and carer organisations that shared their experiences with us in discussions, workshops and conferences, providing written materials, examples and advice.
- The Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network and the National Organisation of Practice Teaching that undertook specific pieces of work for the guide.
- The Shaping Our Lives National User Network that led the consultation on the draft guide.

# What the guide is about

This guide focuses on how service users, carers and providers of social work education and training can work together on the degree programmes. It covers the principles, practicalities and range of approaches to building and sustaining these partnerships. The key messages of the guide apply also to developing service users' and carers' involvement in all types of training for social work and social care staff and in the design and delivery of services.

# Key messages

## 2.1. For the future

- The involvement of service users and carers in the design and delivery of the social work degree offers a major opportunity for a new generation of social workers to gain a thorough grounding in service users' and carers' experiences and expectations from the very start of their training and careers.

- Many universities and colleges that are offering the degree programme in England in 2003, together with their allies in service user and carer organisations, have made a good start at working together but progress is uneven across the country and the specific aspects of the programmes.

- In order that this initiative may fully realise its potential to make a difference to social work training, priority should be attached to building up the capacity of both service user and carer organisations and the degree programme providers so that they can work together in constructive and purposive partnerships. There is a call for continuing ring-fenced funding to facilitate this development.

- Training for service user and carer trainers is high on the agenda of their organisations. Different types and levels of training should be offered. There is scope for service user and carer organisations to develop their own training and support systems, and for national bodies to develop accredited training leading to qualifications.

- The payment of service users for their time and expertise is proving to be a challenging and complicated area. The benefits rules may hinder the involvement of some groups of service users. Practice is variable across higher education and some guidance is required.

- Codes of practice on service user and carer participation have been suggested as one of the means to promote consistency, fair treatment, and good quality processes and outcomes for everyone involved.

- As the arrangements for involvement are not prescribed, a wide variety of approaches to the same activities are emerging. Each social work education programme needs to have robust systems in place for monitoring and evaluating their arrangements for involvement. Comparative studies are required to evaluate their relative effectiveness in terms of processes and outcomes.

# Why the guide was developed

Involving service users and carers in the education and training of social workers is higher on the policy and practice agenda than ever before. A three-year qualifying training for social workers was introduced in England in 2003. The successful completion of the programme leads to the award of a degree at honours level that is the new professional qualification for social work. For the first time, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that run these programmes are required by government to involve service users and carers as stakeholders in all parts of the design and delivery of the programme.

Although the national *Requirements for social work training*[1] specify that service users must be involved in all parts of the degree, they do not prescribe how the universities and colleges should go about meeting this remit in partnerships with them.

The opportunity to develop local arrangements with service user and carer organisations is both exciting and challenging. It has to be undertaken in parallel with all the other work involved in setting up and running the programmes.

The total number of service user and carer organisations covering all ages and interests is not known. In preparation for the degree, some universities and colleges have carried out local mapping exercises. National exercises are also underway, including a Shaping Our Lives National User Network project supported by SCIE. In making estimates, we have to take account of the numbers of groups and organisations that are led or controlled by service users or carers and also of the local branches and groups of national charities for service users, including children and young people, and carers. Nationally, therefore, we are estimating in thousands rather than in hundreds of groups of different sizes and membership interests. Some of these organisations are already involved in selecting and training social care workers and students, and they can build on their experiences, but for others it is new territory.

Similarly, many universities already have some experience in service user and carer involvement, typically in teaching sessions on the Diploma in Social Work, the approved social worker (ASW) and other post-qualifying and advanced programmes. They, too, are well placed to build on their existing links. However, in common with colleagues on all the degree programmes, they are engaged for the first time in developing strategies to integrate the active involvement of service users and carers systematically into all their work. This involves translating into practice the statements of intention submitted to the General Social Care Council (GSCC) during the degree accreditation and the subsequent course validation and approval processes. It also involves joint work to develop approaches that are comprehensive and fit for purpose.

At the time of writing, 66 universities in England were accredited and approved to offer the degree. Final figures on the number of students enrolled on the courses that began in 2003 are not yet available but a preliminary figure of about 2,300 students has been quoted. In Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, the degree programmes will be introduced in 2004. The pace and progress of work on service user and carer participation varies, with some starting their preparations in

2002 and others scheduling this work into the six months before the start of the programmes.

As anticipated, a wide variety of approaches to the same task of developing participation are also evolving. These will be tried out and tested over the next three years. Encouragingly, the Department of Health Policy Research Programme is commissioning evaluative research on this initiative. Until the first intake of students graduate and begin to practise in 2006, we cannot make judgements about the relative effectiveness in terms of processes and outcomes of the various approaches to involving service users and carers. What we can and indeed have set out to do is describe the similarities and differences in the emerging approaches, and bring together knowledge and resources to inform continuous development and the debate on the criteria for evaluating them.

# The content of the guide

This guide focuses on *how* partnerships between the degree programme providers on the one hand, and service user and carer organisations on the other, might be formed and sustained. It goes step by step through the stages and processes of planning and preparing for active and purposeful partnerships. The guide outlines the issues that have to be considered and some of the options for action at each point. Wherever possible, it provides resources directly in the form of written material and examples from practice or gives directions to documents, websites and contacts that the user of the guide may wish to follow up.

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# Who the guide is for

The guide is for everyone involved in educating and training social workers, even though they may be involved in different ways and for different reasons. The guide may be of particular interest and relevance to individuals and groups most directly involved in the degree. These are:

- service users and carers who are involved or interested in becoming involved;
- academic staff with day-to-day responsibility for service user and carer participation in the programme and their colleagues;
- staff in agencies that provide practice learning opportunities and participate in student assessments;
- students themselves;
- staff in the universities and the national bodies with management, quality assurance, and monitoring responsibilities relating to the degree.

The guide may also be of interest to groups and individuals providing social work post-qualifying education and training or developing service users' and carers' participation in the training of other professionals such as nurses and doctors or in training social care workers. The principles and practicalities that it sets out also apply more widely to the involvement of service users and carers in designing, commissioning, delivering and monitoring services.

# How the guide was created

The guide is based on a synthesis of the following:

- The literature on service users and carers, including reviews, books and articles that cover their views on and expectations of social workers, practical guides and models and experiences of involvement in social work education and training.

- Reports of conferences and focus groups that have been run to promote service user and carer participation in social work education and prepare for the introduction of the degree programmes.

- The responses to a SCIE survey of the 72 universities and colleges providing Diploma in Social Work programmes which asked for information about their plans, approaches and progress towards service user and carer involvement in the degree programmes. This was sent in February 2003 to all the HEIs accredited to provide social work degree programmes by the GSCC in December 2002, and to potential providers applying for accreditation in 2003 or providing social work education at that time. The initial responses were supplemented by additional information from some universities and colleges once their plans for involvement were firmed up or approved in the summer of 2003.

- Information and advice from national bodies and key stakeholders that steered the development of the new degree and were represented on the Department of Health Reform of Social Work Education and Training Qualification Development Group.

- The results of meetings and discussions with service user and carer groups and their partners in higher education about the challenges and opportunities arising from working together, and their plans and approaches to participation.

- The accounts and debates of service users and social work education providers on the key issues relating to involvement in workshops run by SCIE at five Department of Health conferences on implementing the social work degree.

- Finally, and importantly, the Shaping Our Lives National User Network led a consultation on the guide. They invited people from a range of service user organisations with expertise in training to comment on the draft guide. They arranged a meeting that was co-chaired by the Chairman and Manager of the Network; at this meeting SCIE staff benefited from the advice of the members who had read the guide on how its content and format could be improved.

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# Changes in social work training

It may be helpful for everyone involved in the degree programmes to be knowledgeable about the background to its introduction and, above all, its main purpose.

*A quality strategy for social care*[2] signalled the introduction of the changes. It included the modernisation of qualifying training for social workers in its proposals to support quality and continuous improvements in social care. The registration of social workers by the GSCC in England and the equivalent Councils in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales under the 2000 Care Standards Act from 2003 is also part of this strategy. The thrust of all the new arrangements is that service users and carers get high quality social work services in terms of both processes and outcomes. Thus the changes, including service user and carer participation in training, are the means to the ends of improving experiences and outcomes rather than ends in themselves.

Issued under the 2000 Care Standards Act, the *Requirements for social work training*[1] in England specify "what providers of social work training must do", covering the entry, teaching, learning and assessment requirements for the degree programmes. *The national occupational standards for social work*[3] and the Quality Assurance Agency subject benchmark statement for social work (2000) form the basis for the assessment of students at the end of the degree programme. Taken together, the requirements, standards and benchmark statement comprise the prescribed curriculum for the degree. The emphasis is on practice, with academic learning to support it. To this end, students will spend at least 200 days gaining experience and learning in practice settings.

Appendix 2 of the *Requirements for social work training* sets out the roles of stakeholders in programme design and delivery. The seven named groups of stakeholders are:

- employers
- HEIs
- students
- service users
- practice assessors
- external examiners
- GSCC.

Importantly, service users and HEIs are the only stakeholder groups that have been assigned roles in all parts of programme design and delivery.

Their roles are in:

- student selection
- design of the degree
- teaching and learning provision
- preparation for practice learning
- provision of placements
- learning agreements
- assessment of students
- quality assurance.

This is an ambitious agenda in which the type of knowledge that service users and carers can impart is identified as a strong lever for improving social care. It recognises that service users and carers are themselves experts in what would make for more control, choice and better quality in their everyday lives, and in existing services. The purpose of the agenda is to ensure that newly qualified social workers have a thorough understanding of the standards of practice, processes and outcomes that service users and carers want. Thus, from

the very start of their professional career, they will treat service users and carers as active participants in service delivery rather than as passive recipients.

In support of these developments, each accredited university was allocated a special grant of £6,200 (total for England: £400,000) through the GSCC to support service user and carer involvement from January to December 2003. An additional grant (total for England: £420,000) for the same purpose was subsequently allocated for April 2003-March 2004. At the time of writing, discussions are progressing about the mechanisms and further funding required in order that the capacity for involvement can be achieved.

Detailed information on the reform of social work education in England has been mainly available in paper form and also electronic form through the websites of the Department of Health and the GSCC (www.doh.gov.uk/swqualification; www.gscc.org.uk). When the special Department of Health website closes, the main sources of information on the degree and its further development will be the GSCC, with Department of Health publications still available in paper and electronic forms. Information on related development work and materials to support implementation is available from Topss England (www.topssengland.net), the Practice Learning Taskforce (www.practicelearning.org) and SCIE (www.scie.org.uk).

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# Preparing for participation: key messages

The material collated during this project suggests some key points to consider at the very start of the preparations for participation. These are covered in detail later and highlighted here:

- Everyone involved benefits from working out and signing up to the *values and principles* of involvement as early as possible in the process of forging partnerships.

- If there is a comprehensive *strategy* for overall involvement right from the start, then it will be easier to include those new roles for service users and carers where progress may be slower and more complicated.

- Effective service user and carer participation involves a lot of people working in new ways. Service users, carers, lecturers, other academic staff, administrators, students, employers, providers of practice learning and assessors could see this as a *development exercise* that they engage in together.

- Everyone involved needs resources in terms of people, time, money, and proper support to make this work. This applies equally to service user and carer organisations as to others. A *budget* to pay for participants' time, expenses and for other related costs can help to make this a reality.

- Actively promoting and sustaining participation is a *process* and not a one-off event. It takes *time* to build up respectful and purposive relationships and to give attention to the practicalities.

- A lot of enthusiasm and goodwill is required to make this work and has already been invested. There are many other pressures and demands on everyone involved. At the start, only a small number of service users and carers per programme may be available and willing to take this initiative forward. *Widening participation* is a key task.

# The values and principles of involvement

Because working out and signing up to the values and principles of involvement early in the process of forging partnerships is very important, we offer some suggestions here.

Taken together, the values of service user organisations and of social work provide a firm foundation on which to build a framework for participation that is respectful and meaningful rather than tokenistic.

The service user movement emphasises the importance of models of participation that are based on human rights, equalities, inclusion and the social model of disability. Their approaches seek to empower people and counter oppressive and discriminatory practice. There is overlap between the values of service user-controlled organisations and those of social work and social care. Thus the values of social work and social care include the right to respect, privacy and confidentiality, the right to choose, the promotion of independence and treating each person as an individual. The *Code of practice for social care workers* provides the most recent and clear statement of these values, setting out in detail the conduct that is expected of these workers[4]. In a recent paper on getting closer to other people's direct experiences, Beresford[5] includes a list of approaches, emphasising that they should not be seen as mechanistic 'techniques' but rather as a set of value-based principles.

For over 10 years, pioneering individuals and organisations in the service user movement have been developing the principles for putting their values into practice. They are spelt out in the many publications, including reports of projects, conferences and focus groups that are referenced here and elsewhere in the guide[6-12]. Across service user-controlled organisations, there is strong agreement about what these principles are and what they cover.

Each university and college should work with their partners to develop a *written protocol of values, principles and practices* that is then owned and signed up to by all parties. Some examples on which to build are summarised here. The overlaps in their content emphasise the consensus about the core set of principles and issues. These examples might be used to check whether local agreements are comprehensive but their content should not be imported wholesale or imposed without thorough discussion and agreement. Developing a local protocol is part of the process of building up trust, respect, and purposeful working relationships. When the degree programme is running, the local protocol can be used to monitor and evaluate progress.

## Example

**Michael Turner and Shaping Our Lives National User Network, 2002**[9]
*Guidelines for involving service users in social work education*

These guidelines are presented in four sections that are summarised here.

**Section 1** covers the key concerns of service users on current practice that were raised at a Shaping Our Lives National User Network seminar in 2000. The issues, based on the direct experience of service users, including poor practice, "pointed the way to the positive principles that should underlie best practice user involvement".

**Section 2** sets out four principles of best practice involvement. Only extracts from the text on each principle are included here. The principles are:

> *Involvement should be planned and structured:* it must be based on a true partnership between academics and service users and other stakeholders. It needs to be a key part of the overall planning of a course and curriculum. [continues….]
>
> *Involvement should be based on work with organisations that are controlled and run by service users:* user involvement is too often based on the participation of an individual or individuals…. Working through organisations provides the basis for broader involvement that is facilitated by people who are better placed to represent a range of service users' perspectives…. Another issue to consider when contacting organisations is that service users stress the importance of users' concerns being distinct from those of carers.
>
> *Fees and expenses:* the expertise of service users involved in training should be fully recognised…. The payment of fees is a means of recognising the value and importance of users' contributions and as supporting the parity of users' input with that of paid staff. Rates of payment should reflect the skills and experiences of people involved and should be comparable to those paid to other consultants.
>
> *Access to training:* good practice also needs to address making all education and training opportunities accessible to all service users as both students and teachers/trainers. Having social work students who are service users should not be seen or used as a means of service user involvement…. Their presence should be seen as a bonus and they should not be exploited or relied upon (for achieving involvement).

**Section 3** focuses on putting service user involvement into practice. It covers getting started, planning, ensuring access, and resources. **Section 4** gives examples of good practice, including the work of the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network with the University of Bath on the Diploma in Social Work course.

## Example

**Peter Beresford et al, 1994[10]**
*Changing the culture: Involving service users in social work education*

This example from 10 years ago is included because it raises a lot of key, enduring issues about developing meaningful involvement that still have to be tackled. The summary guidelines in the report cover overcoming the barriers to involvement (Section 1), and a coherent approach to involvement (Section 2). The recommendations in Section 1 include the following:

- The service user experience and perspective should have equal standing with other expert perspectives.
- Educational environments have to be made fully accessible. This includes the buildings, facilities, the languages used and the provision for information and communication in a range of accessible formats.
- Educators and students may also be service users. This experience should be validated and supported.
- Service user trainers should be paid at the same rate as other trainers. Payment should be in an appropriate form and cover all support required.
- A range of supports should be provided to help service user trainers make the most effective contribution. These include the chance to train in pairs and groups, information about the context of their contribution and about access and facilities, and flexibility in training arrangements.
- Social work educators need support to ensure that they respond positively rather than defensively to service user trainers' increased contribution.
- Both service user trainers and educators need training to ensure the effectiveness of service user involvement in training.

Some of the recommendations in Section 2, such as the need for a systematic, coherent and comprehensive approach to involvement developed in partnership working, have now been firmly embedded in the national *Requirements* for the new degree. Those that deal with processes include the following:

- Appropriate forums will need to be developed to ensure that effective service user involvement runs the whole way through training.
- Full use should be made of the growing body of training and related material produced by disabled people and other service users themselves. Service user trainers should be supported to use a wide range of teaching methods, including workshops, videos and group exercises.
- New participatory and emancipatory approaches to research should be included in research teaching on social work courses. Service user trainers have a key role in teaching them.
- The theories and critiques of service users should be fully represented and given proper weight on the courses.

*contd .../*

- Service user participation is one aspect of addressing involvement, which should also be included as a major subject of study and a key theme in training.
- Service user trainers should be sought from *all* groups, including, for example, people affected by HIV/AIDS, homeless people and people with 'hidden impairments'.
- Service user involvement should be seen as part of broader anti-discrimination and anti-oppression teaching. Service user trainers should be offered guidance and support on anti-discrimination.
- Educators should ensure that Black and other minority ethnic trainers have equal access, support and opportunities to provide training.
- Service user trainers should not be restricted to discussion about being a service user or user involvement.
- The issue of representatives is highly contentious. It is frequently raised as an obstacle. Local organisations offer a starting point. 'Representativeness' should be addressed in training, and a wide range of service users' views included.
- Social work can be concerned with restricting people's rights. Service user trainers have a particularly important contribution to make in teaching about this area.

## Example

**Young Independent People Presenting Educational Entertainment (YIPPEE) and Citizens as Trainers (CATS), 2002[11]**
*How to consult with people who use services (or anyone else, for that matter)*

This is a two-page locally prepared brief that was the result of a day workshop attended by 15 members of the YIPPEE and CATS groups. In summary, it states:

- Treat us as you would any other expert consultants!
- Don't use isolated individual service users and pretend they are 'representatives'.
- We are much more powerful in groups. Invite 2 or 3 of us so we can support each other.
- Give us good notice, so we can support each other and plan/explain everything fully to our members, put things in our diaries.
- Ensure that the groups you choose are not just white, English speaking, non-disabled … convenience groups.
- Be aware of our transport difficulties.
- Timing of meetings is really important. 9 am or 10 am is too early. How about pm with food?
- Access to buildings: give clear directions, large maps, ensure access for all.
- Let us know, if it is a formal meeting, what the rules are, how long it will be, what the agenda is, when we can have a break.
- Let go of power/all those professional barriers. We are your equals and you are asking for our advice.
- Start off with a Blank Sheet. Let us be alongside you from the start.
- Access to discussion/presentation. If we are deaf, visually impaired etc.
- Don't assume anything about us, we will try hard not to make assumptions about you.

*contd .../*

- Offer payment in cash on the day. This should be for our time and expenses. Some of us may need to bring personal assistants and they will need payment too. Don't forget to offer/pay for child/dependant care so those of us with caring responsibilities can participate.
- Ask us what our needs are … do not be frightened of getting it wrong.
- Use plain language, not jargon…. This excludes us.
- Remember, not everyone is able to read, have different formats, methods.
- Some of us like poetry, drama, drawings.
- Listen to what we say; make it fun, not formal or intimidating; value our views; be open minded; see us as individuals; don't judge us; don't get annoyed with us because we seem too 'cocky'.
- Keep in mind that we may take a while to formulate opinions; this does not denote lack of intelligence, but if we have never been asked before, it's hard, or maybe we lack confidence.
- Have someone take clear, concise notes of our meeting. Some of us might want an audio-tape or someone to ring us with a summary.
- Remember, we are all on the same side. We want to improve services.

CATS and YIPPEE emphasise that:

Access is the first principle of participation.

## Example

**Shaping our Lives National User Network, 2003**[12]
*Guidelines for making events accessible*

These guidelines emphasise that "access is about providing people with equal opportunity to participate fully in whatever is being offered", and this should be done in a positive and affirmative way. This reminds us that each disabled person will have their own access needs that may change over time and that they may each manage the same impairment/condition quite differently.

The guidelines cover in detail: before a meeting event, getting there, getting in, the place, and during the meeting /event. For example:

- *Before a meeting/event:* this sets out in detail the wide range of access needs that should be covered and the sort of questions that could be asked. These include the format of printed material, requirements for lip speakers, British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters, hearing loops, palantypists, information in other languages, special chairs, parking places and dietary needs. It also asks about the needs of any accompanying personal assistant/support worker or assistance dog. It also specifies the need for the agenda in advance with a clear explanation of each item.

*contd .../*

- *During the meeting/event:* this covers how to conduct the 'housekeeping' in an inclusive manner, the importance of sticking to the agenda, of timing and of agreeing break times. It has a paragraph on agreeing the ground rules for the meeting, suggesting that these could include:
  - respect each other's access needs;
  - only one person to speak at a time;
  - person speaking to say their name and to raise their hand or whatever means is accessible to them to let others know they are the speaker;
  - do not interrupt the speaker;
  - use plain and simple English;
  - if you don't understand what someone is saying, please ask them to repeat it or explain it. You are probably not the only person who doesn't understand;
  - be aware that covering your mouth when speaking might make it difficult for people to read your lips or hear what you say;
  - try to avoid using jargon like SOL for 'Shaping Our Lives';
  - in any reports or discussions after the event do not use people's names; talk about the issue not the person;
  - turn off mobile phones;
  - when reading out speak slowly.

[End of text from the Shaping Our Lives National User Network]

*Note from SCIE:* the Network ground rules above relate mainly to access issues for all participants. They will have to be repeatedly agreed at each meeting and event throughout the process of planning and delivering the courses. It is helpful if they also cover a commitment to:

- respecting each other's contributions;
- agreeing how to handle differences of opinion;
- ensuring that the session is a safe and secure space for everyone present;
- maintaining confidentiality;
- avoiding discriminatory comments;
- not asking personal questions;
- sticking to the issues.

Finally, the *Principles of partnership arrangements for the social work degree*[13] also apply to the development of local protocols on service user and carer involvement as they cover all the stakeholder groups. The seven principles are:

- fitness for purpose;
- valuing diversity both within and between stakeholder groups;
- flexibility and adaptability with defined review standards;
- clear lines of accountability, which recognise the contributions different stakeholders will make;
- transparency of decision making and funding allocation;
- value for money;
- overt acknowledgement of the benefits and costs of maintaining partnership arrangements.

# Getting started: the process and practicalities

This part of the guide covers the main issues that need to be considered in preparing for involvement in the social work degree. It is based on the responses of social work academic staff to our initial request for information, on discussions and workshops that included service users and carers, and on further information that was provided as planning work gathered momentum in the summer of 2003. About half those contacted (36) responded quickly to our request by e-mail, post or telephone. Most of this group provided full and enthusiastic accounts of their plans and achievements, albeit at different stages. Others were unable to share their plans immediately but contributed once they were in a position to do so.

The scope of information spans the number and type of organisations, service users and carers directly involved; their work together on selecting students and designing the degree; their plans for developing service user and carer roles in all aspects of the degree; and their arrangements for paying participants. It also covers the gaps in their arrangements and views on the most challenging aspects of the development and the levers for promoting and sustaining effective participation. Some examples from this self-reported material are included here.

Many of the activities described here take place in parallel with each other and their time-scales overlap.

The first steps towards service user and carer involvement include*: securing resources; deciding who will take the initiative forward; defining service users and carers; thinking about the meaning and level of involvement; planning training and support; addressing the payment issues; identifying, approaching, and bringing together potential partners*.

## 10.1. Securing resources

Before the work with service user and carer organisations begins, each HEI has to decide about *resources in terms of staff*, *time* and *budget* that can be allocated to this development. These decisions require negotiation within the schools and faculties of the universities and colleges, between heads of social work departments and lecturers, with programme planning, management and curriculum development boards, administration and finance divisions.

This exercise is more complex than it may appear on the surface. The special grant through the GSCC of £6,200 to each programme in 2002/03 (total grant for England: £400,000) made a welcome contribution towards the expenses of developing service user and carer involvement in the first instance. A further grant (total for England: £420,000) has been provided for 2003/04. Both the programme providers and their partners in service user and carer organisations attach importance to the continuation of ring-fenced funding in future years. At the time of writing, discussions are progressing about the mechanisms and funding that are required in order to achieve the capacity for service user and carer involvement.

The respondents to the SCIE survey have commented that the issue of longer-term funding concerns them. While they are keen and, indeed, required to involve service users and carers, discussions with colleagues raise the issue of the proportion of resources that should be allocated to this element of the programme.

These debates arise because inputs into the courses are often subject to assessment in terms of how they assist students to meet their learning outcomes. Thus the courses have to be 'fit for the purpose' of equipping students to meet the competencies, standards and academic requirements for the award of the degree and registration to practise. Resources assigned to one aspect of the programme affect the amounts that can be invested in other core aspects. A budget for service user and carer participation is regarded as essential, given that it is a core activity for programme providers.

As well as making decisions about how much of the total budget could be spent on service user and carer involvement, programme teams have sought to secure additional special funding. *Sources of ring-fenced money include:*

- Special funds within the universities for collaboration and development work. These funds have been influential in supporting early initiatives on service user and carer involvement in social work education and have provided seed corn money for the new degree (eg Open University, University of Portsmouth, University of Salford).

- The grants received by all potential degree providers through the GSCC. This money has been used in a variety of ways. These include funding development workers and outreach work to build up alliances with service user and carer organisations, paying meeting costs, travel expenses and fees, and supporting service user and carer-led work.

- The grants from the Practice Learning Taskforce for short-term regional projects. Some of these projects have covered the broad issues of service user and carer involvement or have focused on building links with more service user organisations to increase the pool of practice learning opportunities (eg East Midlands and North East Regions).

- The grants following bids to the Social Policy and Social Work Learning and Teaching Support Network (SWAP*ltsn),* and to other organisations and funding bodies. For example, these are contributing to the development of course modules with organisations for families and to increasing the participation of children and young people (Royal Holloway College, University of London).

- Contributions from allied national and local training and workforce development bodies obtained by active approaches (Topss England and the Workforce Development Confederations).

- Creating or planning a joint fund in one region or town with contributions from neighbouring HEIs and others to work together with local groups and finance development work (eg Brighton and Sussex, North East, East Midlands).

Importantly, the essential but 'hidden' contribution of many service user and carer organisations, individuals and programme providers must be recognised. Staff and members have already made a substantial investment in terms of time, money and expertise to the development of the degree. Time devoted to this initiative means less time for other core tasks.

## 10.2. Taking the lead and/or the day-to-day responsibility

All staff should be involved with service users and carers in the delivery of the degree.

However, setting up the arrangements in the first instance requires a lot of time, skill, determination and effort, as does sustaining them. While heads of departments take overall responsibility, the approaches include:

- Assigning the task to an existing member of staff with dedicated time and support from others. This approach is widespread.
- Sharing the task out among several members of staff. This approach is also common. For example, different members of staff may lead on involving service users and carers in student selection, designing course modules and developing practice learning opportunities with service user and carer organisations.
- Recruiting a new member of staff or a consultant on a short-term contract to develop participation. Several universities have adopted this approach (eg Bristol, Brunel, Coventry, Middlesex, Anglia Polytechnic University and City College Norwich). Some of these posts are part-time or time-limited. The job titles include service user and carer coordinator, facilitator or development worker, and partnership manager. A person with experience as a service user or carer could be recruited for this post but this has not been standard practice.
- Getting together with other universities and colleges in a region to secure funding and jointly appoint a local coordinator or liaison worker (eg Brighton and Sussex, Liverpool and John Moores, and North East Region Programme Providers).

## 10.3. Defining service users and carers

In the last 10 years the terms 'service user' and 'carer' have become part of the vocabulary of social work and social care. Before approaching potential partners, staff teams in some universities have worked towards developing a shared understanding of the groups and individuals identified by these terms.

Traditional definitions have sometimes focused only on people who are current or past service users, and hence have direct experiences to impart. Now, broader, more inclusive definitions are preferred. For example, in introducing a literature review for the Department of Health that was undertaken in preparation for the degree, Swift[14] states:

> We have adopted both an administrative definition of 'service users' – those who are *eligible* to access social work services – but also include those who define themselves as potential users of social work services, either because they anticipate a future need, or because they choose not to use the services that are currently available to them.

Service user organisations give their own definitions. In 2003, Shaping Our Lives National User Network suggested the definitions and meanings that are set out in the following example overleaf.

As shown, service user organisations reject any use of the term 'service user' to imply that a person's most defining characteristic is that of a passive recipient of services. Instead, they advocate that a service user should always be self-identifying and seen as a person first and foremost. They do not see themselves as fitting neatly into the various service divisions or client groups. Rather, they emphasise their active engagement in services as in other parts of their lives, and the experiences of services that they hold in common with each other.

**Example**

### Shaping Our Lives National User Network definitions and meanings

**'Service user': what people sometimes mean by this term**
The term 'service user' can be used to restrict your identity as if all you are is a passive recipient of health and welfare services. That is to say, a service user can be seen as someone who has things 'done to them' or who quietly accepts and receives a service. This makes it seem that the most important thing about you is that you use or have used services. It ignores all the other things you do and which make up who you are as a person.

**What do we mean when we say 'service user'?**
This is *not* what Shaping Our Lives National User Network means when we talk of 'service users'. We see 'service user' as an active and positive term, which means more than one thing. It is important that 'service user' should always be based on self-identification. But here are some of the things we think it means:

- It means that we are in an unequal and oppressive relationship with the state and society.
- It is about entitlement to receive welfare services. This includes the past when we might have received them and the present. Some people still need to receive services but are no longer entitled to for many different reasons.
- It may mean having to use services for a long time which separate us from other people and which make people think we are inferior and that there is something wrong with us.
- Being a service user means that we can identify and recognise that we share a lot of experiences with a wide range of other people who use services. This might include, for example, young people with experience of being looked after in care, people with learning difficulties, mental health service users, older people, physically and/or sensory impaired people, people using palliative care services and people with drug and alcohol problems.

This last point about recognising our shared experiences of using services, whoever we are, makes us powerful and gives us a strong voice to improve the services we are given and to give us more control and say over what kind of service we want.

**'User-controlled': what do we mean when we say 'user-controlled'?**
There is a range of meanings of 'user-controlled'. Here are some of the things Shaping Our Lives National User Network thinks 'user-controlled' could include:

- Service users decide what and how they want things done.
- The majority of the controlling group (usually the management committee) of the organisation are users of the organisation or members of the group for whom it was set up.
- The group or organisation strives to work from an equalities approach to service users.

Carers' organisations also favour inclusive definitions. For example, a Carers UK definition states:

> Carers look after family members, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability.

The leaflet, *A commitment to carers*[15] defines a carer of a person with a mental health problem as:

> Someone who provides or intends to provide practical or emotional support to someone with a mental health problem. You may or may not live with the person you care for. You may be a relative, partner, friend or neighbour. You may be a young person but you now find yourself in the position of needing to support an unwell person.

In practice, once the meanings of the terms 'service user' and 'carer' have been discussed, many universities opt for broad definitions that include as many potential participants as possible and enable organisations and individuals themselves to decide whether they should get involved.

## 10.4. Thinking about the meaning and level of involvement

Participants in the SCIE project have emphasised that programme providers and their partners need to *be very clear from the start about the principles, aims and intended outcomes of service user and carer involvement*. There is a link between decisions in this area and budgetary considerations. On the one hand, the budget available may put limits on the amount, type and extent of participation and preparation for it. On the other hand, the level of involvement sought may affect the size of the budget that is needed.

There is a long-standing debate about the meaning of 'partnership', 'participation', 'involvement' and 'working together'[16-19]. These terms are often used interchangeably, are ambiguous and may have different meanings for different people. The challenge is how to put into practice the ideas underpinning these terms.

Taylor[20] offers a framework for the discussion of service user participation in social work education. She suggests that our thinking should cover: *culture and values*; *roles and responsibilities*; and the *'value added' to professional education by the partnership*. She emphasises the importance of negotiating and agreeing the nature of the partnership with service users.

In relation to roles, Manthorpe[21] identifies three models for incorporating the experience of carers into social work training: personal testimony; carers as co-trainers; and the use of the programme participants' experience of providing and receiving care. Although a distinction should be made between carers and service users, this model may also apply to service users' contributions. In a recent paper, Beresford[5] makes a case for the direct transmission of people's 'experiential knowledge' in research and training, using ways that empower them. He offers for discussion the theory that: "The greater the distance between direct experience and its interpretation, then the more likely resulting knowledge is to be inaccurate, unreliable and distorted".

Barnes and colleagues[22] trace the evolution of participation from a 'consumerist' to an 'empowerment' approach and, most recently, a 'stakeholding' and 'partnership' approach. They "consider partnership a more realistic approach because it acknowledges differentials in power without demanding equality". However, they point out that "empowerment may be an outcome of partnership with service users even if it is not the primary aim".

Some service user organisations such as the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network prefer to define themselves as allies rather than as partners, arguing that the term 'allies' more accurately reflects their relationship with the programme providers. Given these issues, it will be necessary to discuss and clarify the approach on each programme. Empowerment may be the value underpinning the training and the outcome of work with service users and carers[16-18]. Also, it may be a condition of engagement laid down by potential service user and carer partners[23,24].

The providers of social work education have stated that they have to *be clear from the start about the levels of participation* that they hope to achieve in the first instance. These may change over time, as experience builds up, and when more funding becomes available. A clear, shared understanding on all sides about the aims, and scope of the partnership should facilitate working together. This includes the influence and power that service users, carers and other stakeholders will have in decision making, for example, in the student selection process.

Partners may want to use a rating scale to assess the degree or level of service user and carer involvement in the degree programme overall and in various elements of it. The ladder of citizen participation created by Arnstein[25], with its eight steps ascending from citizen manipulation at the bottom to citizen control at the top, has strongly influenced the development of tools for evaluating service user involvement.

These scales usually cover a continuum of involvement ranging from 'none' at one end to 'full involvement' and 'integration' at the other. The scale developed by Goss and Miller[19] to evaluate user- and carer-centred community care has been adapted and applied to service user involvement in nursing, social work and mental health education[26-9].

The latest version of this scale is included in the *National continuous quality improvement tool for mental health education* published by the Northern Centre for Mental Health[29] (www.ncmh.org.uk). This very useful tool aims to help the Workforce Development Confederations in their commissioning of post-qualification mental health education programmes but surely has wider applicability, including to the social work degree.

The tool must be used in conjunction with the accompanying guidance notes. Sections 2 and 3 cover mental health service user and carer involvement in programme planning, delivery and evaluation. Following the completion of open-ended questions and discussions, groups of service users and carers use a five-point scale to award a score for involvement. This is then weighted and contributes to one overall percentage score for the programme. Different scores are attached to the five levels, ranging from 'no involvement' to 'partnership'. Partnership is achieved when "educationalists and users work together systematically, strategically, with full support, reimbursement structures and with education and training opportunities available. Users are involved at all stages of the planning, delivery and management processes. Decisions are made jointly. Users are involved in the assessment of students in the practice area. Users are working as lecturers".

While such scales aid thinking about the *level of involvement*, they do not fully cover the equally important issue of the *quality of this involvement*. Separate mechanisms will be required to set quality standards and work towards achieving them.

## 10.5. Training and support

The importance of training and support for service user and carer participation is a clear message from contributors to this project. We suggest that the implementation strategy for the degree programmes should accord priority to the development of training. Written and

agreed protocols should also be in place specifying the arrangements for supporting service users and carers in all their day-to-day work on the degree programmes. These should cover preparation, delivery and de-briefing, and set out what support will be available, how it will be provided and by whom.

The need for proper induction, training and support is not confined to service user and carer organisations and individual trainers. It applies also to academic and administrative staff, students, and staff in the agencies providing practice learning opportunities. The amount and type of preparation and training may vary between these groups and individuals within them, but the case for including everyone rests on the reasons that follow.

First, it should not be assumed that all staff and the new intake of students understand the principles and practicalities of working with service users and carers. This includes what to expect, how to behave, and the questions that should and should not be asked in discussion sessions.

Second, service users and carers should not be expected to participate without access to training and support to develop their skills and confidence if they require it. Only a very small minority of service users and carers are interested in training social workers. The pool of potential trainers is unlikely to increase if they are not offered the tools to do the job.

Finally, training and support have been identified as levers for making service user and carer participation work. The responsibility for making it a positive experience for all the parties involved cannot lie with any single group: rather, it has to be shared out. Students want high quality education and their teachers share this interest. Service users and carers want to make their best possible contribution to teaching and learning. They value training, support and constructive feedback as mechanisms to improve their inputs. Service users have also pointed out that involvement in student training can be energising and rewarding. Properly organised, it can increase personal confidence, skills and knowledge, and open doors to further education, paid work and public service.

There are a variety of approaches to 'training the trainers', and it is unlikely that one course or method will suit everyone. This is because service users and carers are a very mixed group with diverse backgrounds, life experiences, education, motivation and commitments. It is also because the type and level of their involvement in social work training will vary. Service users who are designing and delivering a course module over a term may have different training and support needs from service users who are contributing to a single session on the course.

Some training programmes are already tried and tested but others require a substantial investment of resources to develop them. The mental health survivors and service user movement has a long track record in providing training courses and packages for service user trainers[30-3]. Their methods and materials are adaptable for use in the training of other service user groups. More recently, many other organisations for children and young people, adults with disabilities and carers have developed 'training for trainers'. The Central England People First National User Training Development Project for people with learning difficulties described here is an example of one such initiative[34].

In addition to training developed and delivered by service user and carer organisations themselves, other sources of access to training for trainers should also be explored. The options include:

- Enabling service users and carers to take up training courses that lead to a recognised teaching qualification. For example, some service users with relevant qualifications or work experience would like to do one of the generic 'training to teach adults' courses accredited by the City & Guilds

Group. Others would like access to the same training opportunities that the university offers to the academic staff with whom they work.

- Developing learning opportunities and qualifications especially for service user and carer trainers. City and Guilds Affinity, for example, specialises in designing courses to support health and community provision. There may also be scope for developing new training through the workforce development bodies for social care that make up the Topss UK Partnership recently approved to develop the social care Sector Skills Council to be called 'Skills for Care'. Topss England (www.topssengland.net) already has the task of developing learning materials to support an induction process for organisations new to practice learning for the degree. Along with others, service user and carer organisations providing student placements will have access to contributory funding and learning support materials on work-based learning and assessment. Participants can gain recognition of their competence through the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) assessment process.

The case for offering training to service users and carers involved in the degree is emphasised here. However, there is a distinction to be made between offering

## Example

**Central England People First National User Training Development Project**
Central England People First is a user-led organisation for people with learning difficulties with over 10 years' experience in service provision, advocacy, research, consultancy and training. It carried out this project to help other people with learning difficulties to learn how to be trainers with funding from the Department of Health.

The project team was made up of four members of Central England People First with experience in training and partnership working. They developed the two-day training programme and materials, with help from the project support person and external advisor. They took care to design a programme that the four team members with learning difficulties could deliver themselves, calling on additional support only when needed. They also ensured that the courses were delivered in an empowering way with plenty of opportunities for everyone to actively participate and gain skills and knowledge that they could use to provide training.

Eight organisations across the country tried out the programme and 80 people with learning difficulties and supporters attended the training. Over the two days there were opportunities to practise 'role plays', speaking in public, using a video recorder, and to attend workshops on how people could use their own experience as a basis for training activities that they could lead.

The participants' evaluation forms completed at the end of the course contained positive comments about each of its components. The training programme was established and made available for adaptation and wider use. The project shows not only that some people with learning difficulties can and want to participate in staff training but also that they themselves can take the lead in training potential trainers.

training and requiring it. Some people are cautious about creating a pool of special trainers in case it makes service users' and carers' contributions 'too professional', and dilutes their impact on student learning. There is no evidence that this will happen but every effort should be made to include a wide a range of service users and carers and offer the type of training and support that they require.

## 10.6. Payments for involvement

> "The issue of payment is exercising us all." (senior lecturer in social work)

The principle of paying for service users' and carers' time and expertise, travel and other expenses is widely accepted. It is one of the conditions of partnership that service user organisations have clearly spelt out, as shown by the examples earlier in this guide.

There is a lot of variation across service user and carer groups and individuals in what they expect and, indeed, charge. In addition, there are no nationally agreed rates of payment for their work in higher education. Rather, each HEI has to develop and negotiate its own policy and procedures within the organisation and with potential and current partners. As a result, there are a range of differing approaches to the amount and practicalities of payment. Service users and carers working with more than one university or college may be paid at different rates and in different ways for the same activity.

The SCIE project shows that payments are widely regarded as a very complicated area. Both the programme providers and some of their potential service user and carer partners identify payment as a key implementation issue. A common and realistic concern, based on early experiences, is that meaningful involvement throughout the degree has substantial resource implications. This anxiety arises in the context of difficulties of providing the course within the current budgets, and limited development funds. Estimates of additional costs vary but figures in the region of £15,000 have been quoted.

Before discussion with potential partners begins, some agreement has to be reached about payment within the university. The issues for consideration are *the payments that will be offered, what they will cover, and when, how and to whom they will be paid*.

### *10.6.1. Fees*

The options for remuneration include:

- *Payment at visiting lecturer rates:* many new programme providers have opted for offering service users and carers the same fee for their teaching inputs that they offer to external lecturers, guest speakers and consultants on existing social work courses. These vary and may be based on hourly, half-day or full-day rate or be a flat fee to cover contact and preparation time. Fees often quoted are £20 per hour, £25 for a half-day and £50 for a full day for contributions to teaching sessions. Some organisations pay different fees for different activities, for example from £5 to £10 per hour for planning meetings, the higher rates for teaching, and in the region of £240 per day for written work or consultation. They may offer this fee to individuals or to organisations. For example, the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network have agreed to be paid the external lecturer rate for the delivery of teaching sessions and £5 an hour for other work such as preparation and attendance at meetings. In addition, there is verbal agreement for some work to be paid at consultancy rate.

- *Payment at rates charged by participants' organisations:* some service user and carer groups have worked out what they want to charge and negotiate a price for specific pieces of work on that basis. Some charge flat rates such as £175 to £250 per half-day and £500 for a full day, irrespective of

how many members are involved, or £50-£100 per person for an event. Others suggest between £5 to £25 an hour paid to the participants or to the group. Yet others have negotiable terms or sliding scales for different activities and partners. Their charges typically cover overheads for administration, training, preparation and support, and claims from their members that they take responsibility for settling. The contributions from the university or college in the form of meeting rooms, office space and administrative support may be taken into account in agreeing the actual fee. Some organisations prefer an annual grant or lump sum, including a management fee to cover most of their contributions. Estimates vary but sums of £5,000 and over for a pool of 8-10 service user or carer trainers have been quoted. Payments to organisations for practice learning opportunities, including student placements, are separately arranged.

- *Limited payments:* in order to allow for the financial circumstances and preferences of some service users and carers, limited 'ex-gratia' payments and allowances may be offered[35]. These may be seen as the middle point on the continuum from 'no payment' at one end, to 'full payment' at the other end. Such payments may be made annually or spread out over the year. Advice on this option should be obtained from a reliable source.

- *Payments 'in kind':* instead of cash payments, some organisations arrange activities for participants and their families, including children and young people, or offer gift vouchers or assistance with equipment that helps an individual to contribute to the courses. Opinions are divided about the appropriateness of this approach with adults. However, there is agreement that children should not be paid in cash and other ways without permission from their parents or guardians. Again, reliable advice on these options should be obtained.

In practice, a combination of arrangements and some flexibility will be required, especially where several organisations and individuals are involved. This approach raises dilemmas about consistency and equity. A single or simple solution seems unlikely for the following reasons.

First, although paying fees for time and expertise is widely regarded as best practice by both the service user movement and public bodies, there are many views on payment and on their importance. Some people want to be paid in full to emphasise their equal standing with other partners, and cannot afford or do not wish to participate without payment. Others would like limited payments and allowances in recognition of their contribution. Yet others will work as unpaid volunteers in the spirit of public service and inclusion, emphasising the non-financial gains it may bring to them and to the quality of social care in the long run.

Second, service users' and carers' financial circumstances are varied. Some are self-employed service user or mental health survivor consultants and trainers who rely on the taxable income from this activity. Others are living on retirement pensions or claiming other benefits. Those on disability, employment and other benefits are subject to the national earnings limits and volunteering rules that specify how much additional income can be earned per week without affecting income support, housing and other benefits.

The earnings rules are regularly reviewed and revised, and organisations and individuals can find it difficult to keep abreast of their content and how to interpret them. A project at King's College London tackled this issue by producing two separate guides on the payments and benefits issues, one for service users and survivors, and the other for managers paying those involved, and adding updates[36]. The Mental Health Foundation[37] has published *A fair day's pay: A guide to benefits, service user involvement and payments.* This offers guidance for organisations before starting user

involvement, advice to service users who are considering becoming involved in improving mental health services, and outlines the permitted work rules. Its appendices give additional information for employers, sources of information for service users on benefits rules, and information on who's who in dealing with benefits. The Mental Health Foundation emphasises that the relevant legislation is constantly changing, that where the details are important you should obtain confirmation from a reliable source, and that organisations should always seek independent legal advice in this complex area of employment and other relevant law.

The need identified for such guides underlines the uncertainty and anxiety about payment issues across service provider, user and carer organisations and among individuals.

The view that the benefits rules hinder involvement has been drawn to the attention of government by service users and by organisations with a remit to develop it. This is a national issue that is wider than payment for participation in social work education. It cuts across government departments, including the Department of Health, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Benefits Agency, and requires attention at the highest level if the issues are to be resolved equitably. At the request of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Care, Shaping Our Lives National User Network is producing a SCIE-funded report on why benefits rules make it hard for service users to have a say in social care services.

### *10.6.2. Travel expenses*

It is standard practice to cover all travel expenses incurred by the participants and by personal assistants accompanying them. Public transport costs, taxi fares and car mileage allowances at the HEI or participants' organisations' rates are paid. The problems centre on the need to produce receipts and the timing of payments. As many participants may travel long distances and need taxis there and back, the transport costs alone for one meeting may be substantial, varying with the composition and size of the group. For example, transport costs for a meeting with 8-10 people may be between £100 and £200.

### *10.6.3. Allowances for personal assistants and replacement carers*

Offers of payments to cover childcare, substitute carers and personal assistance are required and accepted practice. The costs depend on the individual's own arrangements, where they live and the employment situation. For example, payments to personal assistants of £7 an hour have been quoted. The cost of a carer or helper through a private agency varies between £10 and £20 and a typical charge in London is £14.50 an hour.

### *10.6.4. Other costs*

Service users and carers also incur other expenses in preparing their inputs into the courses. These include the costs of telephone calls, postage, faxes and photocopying. Most organisations offer to cover these expenses.

The above list may help to illustrate the reasons why universities are concerned about the adequacy of resources for full service user and carer involvement. If service users' and carers' fees, travel and other expenses are paid, then a planning meeting with 8-10 people may cost at least £300 in direct payments to participants. The costs of accessible venues, equipment, and refreshments must also be calculated. In addition, service user and carer organisations need a budget for preparing contributions with their members and for supporting and training their trainers. As the report prepared for the Department of Health by Carers UK and City & Guilds Affinity[38] points out, these costs should be balanced with the benefits of service user and carer involvement.

### *10.6.5. The timing and methods of payment*

Many service users and carers are benefits claimants or live on small incomes. They do not have the reserves to pay for taxis and rail fares, claim them back and then wait a month or more for reimbursement. Some do not have bank accounts and need cash payments. Many participants need their travel and other expenses there and back paid in cash on the day of the event and therefore do not have the receipts for the return journey. Some need the taxi fare paid on arrival. Claim forms are not always user-friendly and they are time-consuming to complete and send off. Understanding and meeting these practical needs is essential if trusting relationships are to be built up and sustained.

Paying service users and carers promptly and flexibly is at odds with the arrangements for paying fees and expenses in universities and colleges. Almost all the responses to the SCIE survey commented on the difficulties that they have encountered in this area. A lot of time has been spent on seeking and finding solutions, and on meetings at senior level with finance sections. Universities and colleges have to exercise tight control over expenditure and they apply the same procedures to many departments. They may require receipts for every item, and pay one month or more in arrears. Some universities pay external lecturers only through the payroll and requests from service users for a different arrangement have been refused. They must be sure that their payment arrangements do not contravene the benefits and tax rules. Tackling these rigidities is testing the ingenuity of everyone involved. Solutions take a long time to achieve. One approach is that service user and carer groups have their own accounts and draw the money in advance so that they can pay expenses on the day. This arrangement may be combined with the payment of an annual, quarterly or monthly fee to cut down on invoicing and avoid delayed payment. Other approaches include special budgets and accounts within departments. One of the responses to SCIE stated:

> "There has been no difficulty about the principle of paying people for involvement in development activities etc. However, cash payments have tested the flexibility of institutional arrangements but a resolution to this is emerging – it may involve installing a safe!"

We have emphasised that getting the practical aspects and details of service user and carer involvement right is an essential part of the process of building up trust and robust relationships. Mistakes may be made along the way and have to be rectified. As with ease of access, prompt and acceptable payment arrangements are key to the success of recruiting service user and carer trainers and retaining them.

## 10.7. Identifying partners

The universities and colleges start this process from different positions, as do their potential partners. Whereas some universities and local groups have started almost from scratch, others already have tried and tested arrangements with local groups.

The alliance between the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network and the University of Bath over almost 10 years is one of the most long-standing and often quoted examples. Members of this Network are already engaged in many aspects of current social work courses over and above delivering teaching sessions. They also have links with other HEIs, including Wiltshire College, Trowbridge.

The University of Salford partnership with CATS and later YIPPEE has been developed over five years. Their approach to joint work is based on citizen empowerment and participation built up through self-directed group work. They estimate that it took 18

months to build up their skills, confidence, and understanding of the social model of disability to a point where they could contribute fully in twos or threes to social work training. CATS and YIPPEE meet fortnightly and now have an office at the university, shared with some lecturers. They presented their model at the International Schools of Social Work Conference in 2002[39]. Since the new degree was announced, both the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network and CATS are being asked to advise other universities on their strategies for service user involvement.

Mental health survivors have contributed in some way to teaching on many social work education and ASW programmes and also to nursing education[27,30, 40-2]. The University of Birmingham supports Suresearch, which is a network of service users in research and education who have experienced mental distress, and their allies. The group meets bi-monthly at the university.

More recently, young people have begun to become involved, using a range of methods, including drama, poetry and videos. For example, the young people from the Lancashire Children's Rights Service used drama to convey their expectations of social workers to a large group of lecturers and practice teachers at Lancaster University's first planning event for the degree.

However, the major shift to the systematic involvement required on the new degree has made it necessary for programme providers to review their arrangements. In doing so, the questions that they are posing themselves include:

- Which organisations are already working with us and how?
- Are there other local and national groups that should be involved?
- Where are the gaps?
- How will we include groups for children and young people, mental health survivors, homeless people, older people, people with learning disabilities, and people from black and minority ethnic groups?
- Shall we work with one or two service user and/or carer groups of trainers or with a range of local groups?
- How many people and organisations do we need to involve?
- What level of involvement, and from whom, do we need to meet all the new requirements?

The changes also give the service user and carer organisations, once informed about them, the chance to consider:

- How well is our involvement working and what needs to change?
- Is training social work students an area in which we want to be involved?
- What would be our terms and conditions for taking part?
- What training and support would our members need?

Many universities have carried out mapping exercises to draw up lists of potential local partners, sometimes working with neighbouring course providers to do so. In such exercises, there is scope for considering whether national organisations might act as a resource. For example:

- The Shaping Our Lives National User Network may provide advice and other inputs.
- Carers UK with City & Guilds Affinity have assessed the feasibility and costs of developing local teams of 8-10 trained and supported carer members to work with each HEI offering the degree.

If national initiatives similar to the one described above are funded, they should substantially increase the capacity of service user and carer-controlled organisations to work with the degree providers.

Mapping local resources is a big task and information may be sought from coalitions of disabled people, centres for independent living, religious bodies, the many other organisations with specific interests, and Councils for Voluntary Services.

Universities and colleges that have limited experience of service user and carer participation and few links with local groups have to opt for 'starting somewhere' by working initially with one or two groups and building up a longer-term strategy together with them. Service user and carer organisations can contribute a lot to the recruitment of new groups. Some groups have put a lot of work into developing accessible leaflets and information about how they contribute to training and reproduce the feedback given by students, staff and the service user or carer trainers. For example, members of the group called 'Folk.us' in Exeter carried out their own research on users as trainers. They have produced four lively and useful information sheets that quote the views of those involved, giving detailed advice on the process, including where to find users[43]. These leaflets were incorporated into the University of Plymouth 10 October 2002 conference report with permission to copy them subject to acknowledgement[44].

## 10.8. Approaching partners

This outreach work takes time and requires careful preparation. It involves telephone calls, e-mails and meetings to explain the initiative to the different organisations, to learn what they do, who else they are involved with, what they might offer and what their terms and conditions are for engagement.

Experiences to date suggest that the lecturers and development workers have to be flexible in their approach and not set out with preconceived ideas about how the involvement process will work. Many service users and carers do not want and are not able to travel long distances to attend meetings at universities. They would like to be included but prefer the staff to visit them in their own homes or local centres or to arrange a central venue. Information leaflets in accessible formats about the degree and about the practical arrangements we have discussed make this stage smoother. Following the initial contact, the lecturer needs to be available to answer any queries and to provide further information.

Some social services departments and voluntary organisations have service user and carer, and children and young people's participation units and workers. They are potentially key allies, acting as a conduit between the universities and individuals and groups, and facilitating direct and indirect inputs to the courses.

## 10.9. Bringing partners together

Recognising that the lead-in time is long, some universities began the process of bringing potential partners together soon after they had applied to the GSCC for accreditation to grant degrees in social work. The events were either organised by one university with local social work employers (eg University of Lancaster, University of Plymouth, 2002), or by regional groups.

In other regions also, neighbouring universities have formed partnerships either to develop a joint degree or to coordinate their work on service user and carer participation (eg Liverpool and John Moores, Brighton and Sussex, Warwick and Coventry). These arrangements have the advantages of avoiding multiple approaches to the same organisations and employers, and maximising the use of resources. For example, by working closely

together, the Universities of Warwick and Coventry have been able to harmonise many of their procedures and dovetail their placements.

Our project provides information on the numbers of groups and individuals who have expressed an interest in or become involved, after several months of preparatory work. The size of the pool of partners varies and is still building up, especially in relation to practice learning opportunities. Typically, a programme provider seems to be working with between four and ten groups. The number of individuals who are actively involved ranges from four to 20, and is usually around 8-10. This means that involving service users and carers directly in all aspects of the degree will remain a challenging task unless and until more people can be recruited. It also

## Example

**North East Region Conference: 'Listening to people's experiences – Models of practice and the future of social work education and training'**

In September 2002 a conference was organised by the North East Regional Liaison Group (Diploma in Social Work and Practice Teacher Programmes) and the North East Regional Topss Forum, in partnership with people who use services, parents and carers in the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne. The HEIs that came together were Durham, Northumbria, Teeside, and Sunderland with New College Durham. The organisations represented were the social services departments across the region, local mental health trusts and centres, and service user and carer organisations. These included NCH Children's Rights Services and ALPS project, Barnardo's, Service Users and Carers as Trainers (SUCAT), and Citizens as Trainers in South Tyneside (Catalist).

Forty people attended. The programme consisted of a guest speaker from the GSCC, followed by a choice of four workshops, lunch, then a guest speaker from SCIE, again followed by four workshops, three of which were repeated from the morning. The workshop themes were based around the various aspects of the degree, namely recruitment and selection, the curriculum, research and quality assurance and management. The workshops had been planned with service users and carers. The specific topics were: social work skills to support carers; involving service users and carers in the ASW programme; users and carers in recruitment and selection; service users and students' assessments; and community development involving people with mental health problems. The issues addressed were: how service users and carers can be involved in each stage; what information, support and resources they need; how can people really work in partnership; and any other suggestions about the ways of involving service users and carers.

In introducing the conference, the regional chair made it clear that everyone viewed the conference 'as the start of the process and not a one-off event', and that the next step was to develop a detailed strategy together. A conference feedback report has been produced and distributed[45]. The members of the group have continued to pool some resources and work together at regional and sub-regional level. They held a series of workshops in the spring of 2003, secured resources for a partnership manager, and at the same time developed their own approaches and local contacts through in-depth work.

emphasises that willing participants are a valuable and scarce resource. Policies and practices must recognise and encourage their commitment so that individuals drop out for their own reasons rather than because of negative experiences.

In contrast, some universities and colleges have pointed out that there are many local service user and carer groups, individuals and voluntary organisations that they could approach. Therefore, they have to have some method of deciding either on their own or with their allies which ones to include. They point out that they do not want to create competition or other problems for the groups. For example, it would be regrettable if resources largely affected decisions in the sense that they selected partners who did not require fees.

# Moving forward

This next and often overlapping stage involves a lot of preparation and negotiation work within the internal university structures and systems, at the same time as keeping up the momentum with service user and carer partners. It is a lengthy process that includes briefing everyone about the degree requirements, proposal writing, committee work at all levels, and course validation. Securing the support of the most senior university staff and the School Directorate, and getting all academic colleagues, course administrators and finance officers on board are integral and essential parts of the process.

Plans and decisions have to be made about the arrangements for service user and carer involvement *in the overall planning and management of the degree*. They also have to cover the roles of service users and carers in: *student selection*; *the design of the degree*; *teaching and learning provision*; *preparation for practice learning*; *provision of placements*; *learning agreements*; *the assessment of students*; and *quality assurance*.

At this stage too, the often complicated and complex issues faced in the preparatory stages have to be re-visited. Issues such as *confidentiality* and *accountability* assume increasing importance and have to be negotiated with all parties.

## 11.1. Planning for involvement at strategic and management levels

This is the area, along with the selection of students, in which some HEIs can report their achievements in the academic year 2002-2003, rather than their plans. A range of approaches are being tried and tested. They seem to be working well, suggesting that there are many ways, rather than one way, to approach service user involvement. A few universities report that it is more difficult to raise service users' and carers' enthusiasm for taking part in planning and management boards than for other activities such as teaching. This seems to stem from a dislike of formal committee meetings and paperwork, and a preference for consultation on their home ground.

Some degree programme providers regard service users' and carers' participation in the programme management and partnership boards as the central plank of their involvement strategy. This approach means that service users and carers, together with the other stakeholder groups, have an overview of the degree programme and can influence the decisions about all its aspects, from design through to quality assurance. In relation to service user participation, the issues that arise include: who should decide about the composition of the committee; and how to include both service user stakeholders who have direct involvement in the running of the course, and also independent service user voices (University of Central England in Birmingham).

The level and nature of participation in the programmes varies from 'limited' to 'integrated'. Some universities and colleges have opted for the attendance of service user and carer representatives at all relevant meetings so that they are part of the body that drives forward the programme and oversees it. Others have opted for meetings with service user and carer representatives about twice a

**Example**

The School of Health and Social Welfare at the Open University reports that it set up its Service User Panel following a workshop with a range of organisations in 2000. This is a largely autonomous body currently consisting of members that come from a diverse field of service user expertise. A person specification for new members and induction and training has been proposed.

The Panel meets formally four times a year and is funded by the School. Members are paid at similar rates to day lecturers and consultants. At each meeting, the Panel and the School staff hold separate sessions and then the groups come together for an integrated session.

The tasks of the Panel have been identified as monitoring the School's activities to achieve internal consistency and integrity, advising on issues relating to service user involvement in all the School's activities, and participating in activities to further such involvement. User members also attend School committees as full participants.

In relation to the social work degree programme that begins in 2005, it is proposed that a nominated sub-group of the Panel will participate directly in the plans and processes, and is currently developing a Code of Practice for Service User Involvement. Service users will be represented initially on all the practice course teams.

**Example**

The University of Warwick and Coventry University have worked together on their arrangements for involvement across their postgraduate and undergraduate social work education programmes. They decided that it was in everyone's interests to harmonise on a sub-regional basis. In their joint enterprise, they have used the notion of guardianship to underpin the work of their new Stakeholder Board. There is a lot of enthusiasm within the universities about this initiative.

The guardians take some responsibility for certain areas of the whole operation in terms of the content and quality of the curriculum. Thus some groups of partners have ownership and responsibility for the issues relating to service user and carer participation, the voluntary sector, and employers. The two organisations that have agreed to be the guardians for service user and carer interests are Disability West Midlands, a federation of organisations of disabled people, and Carers UK.

The Stakeholder Board serves both universities. Its membership covers the three local authority partners, the two service user and carer guardianship groups, one voluntary sector guardian, and university staff. The Board has one large meeting per year and a smaller one half way through the year. At the large meeting, some time is reserved for the stakeholders to meet separately with each university. In addition, the stakeholders discharge their duties in ways that fit in with the different needs and structures of the courses, including their slightly different arrangements for interviewing and admissions.

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Although the guardians have a brief to advise on service user and carer interests and to identify specific issues, including the range of groups and individuals that need to be represented, other stakeholders in the university have responsibility for these interests as well. A written schema about how service user and carer interests are represented has been developed to shape and check out the programmes.

year. Participants may be elected, invited, persuaded, or join because they are the only volunteers.

Some universities are considering or have developed their participation strategy on a school-wide basis so that it covers all teaching and learning programmes including social work and nursing (eg Northumbria University and the Open University). This approach is important as opportunities for interprofessional learning expand and service users and carers become increasingly involved in training on different professional programmes[46].

## 11.2. Selecting students

The recruitment and selection of students is the first area of delivering the degree, rather than planning it, in which service users and carers have actively participated in 2003.

There is consistent evidence from research and consultations that service users and carers across different groups agree about the personal qualities, skills, knowledge and abilities that social workers need[14,38,47-8]. These views are set out in the Department of Health publication[47], *Focus on the future key messages from focus groups about the future of social work training*. Their views cover the help and outcomes they want and also the qualities and standards of behaviour they expect. In summary, service users want social workers to be: physically and emotionally available; supportive, encouraging and reassuring; respectful; patient and attentive; committed to the independence of the individual; punctual; trustworthy; reliable; friendly but not frightened to tell people how they see things; and empathic and warm[47].

Service users and carers also attach great importance to the quality of their relationship with individual social workers, to time to develop such a relationship and to consistency and continuity in their contacts[14].

The above knowledge supports the case for service user and carer involvement in selecting social work students. The universities that started the degree in 2003 had only a short time to make arrangements to include service users and carers and will be reviewing them in the light of their experiences. The major challenges relate to the availability of service users and carers, their preparation along with other members of the panel, the substantial time demands that direct involvement places on them, the issues of consistency and equity in the process for students, and the resource implications, including fee payment. Thus, if service users and carers are to be present at each individual interview, and there are three applicants for each place, 90 interviews may be conducted for 30 places and these may take place once a week over six months.

The approaches that have been adopted include:

- Agreeing with service user and carer partners the questions that they would like applicants to be asked, based on work to establish the skills, knowledge and personal attributes that people want in social workers.

- Arranging for all applicants to attend a group session or interview as part of the selection process and including service users and carers on the panel. This may involve asking questions, observing or making a brief presentation in the same way as other stakeholder groups.

- Arranging for service users and carers to be involved in each candidate's interview. If the same people do not take part in each interview, there may be issues relating to the equitable treatment of candidates, and repercussions if a rejected applicant appeals against the Panel's decision.

- For the future, several universities propose to have places for service users and carers on their admission panels or teams. This arrangement gives service users and carers a role in overseeing the whole process from design through to monitoring, review and quality assurance even if they do not participate in the individual or group interviews of the candidates. Those involved may be members of a wider service user and carer forum or individuals that report to them or to the programme management board.

The admissions teams have also paid attention to the preparation process for student selection. Some teams have held joint training or briefing sessions for everyone involved in interviewing and gone through each stage in detail. They have also made staff time available to meet the different requirements of individual service users and carers and arranged to provide training in interviewing skills, information, support and feedback.

Whatever the specific arrangement, the degree providers will have to be clear about the part that service users and carers will play in making the decision to accept or reject applicants. The university awarding the degree has the ultimate responsibility for this decision and so there is a power differential inherent in the system. Within this limit, however, there is scope for different levels of influence ranging from giving advice that may or may not be taken, to playing the same part in the decision making as other members of the panel.

## 11.3. Teaching and learning provision

There is more experience of service user and carer involvement in this aspect of running social work programmes than in any other. However, this experience is unevenly spread across universities and also across course modules within one university. Although many programmes arrange for service users and carers to run disability, equalities and carer awareness sessions or to give accounts of their personal experiences of services, few have service user and carer-led inputs firmly embedded throughout the course. The degree programmes provide an opportunity to try out and test new more systematic arrangements. At the start, it seems advisable to keep an open mind about the value of the various approaches. Thus, it should not be assumed that what worked before will work now or, indeed, that what worked before will not work now.

A lot of flexibility is needed to meet the learning needs of the students, the academic and practice requirements for the award of the degree and to accommodate the preferences of service users and carers. For example, many groups of trainers follow the social model of disability and focus on the barriers to full participation. They have agreed together what they will teach, and so a person with a learning disability or physical disability will give the same input, focusing on part of the social work role such as assessment or review without reference to how they have been labelled by diagnosis or client group.

Other service users want to specialise in a particular area such as mental health, looking after a child with a disability or the experience of being a looked-after child. In addition, some groups want to design their own modules or inputs whereas others want to develop them in joint work with teaching staff.

Many programme providers have selected specific modules for development in partnership with service users and carers. For

example, the University of Central England in Birmingham has built on previous experience to involve service users and carers in the design and delivery of the modules on *Expectations of Professional Practice*, *Issues for Different User Groups* and *Specialist Practice.* As the *Expectations of Professional Practice* module is delivered early in the course, priority was given to establishing a strong user presence in its core team and a large number of service users have become involved. Whereas some module teams such as the *Specialist Practice* module *on Mental Health* quickly achieved strong service user involvement, others such as the comparable modules on children and families and on adults are building up wider core groups through consultation and networking before the courses are delivered in 2005.

Some programme providers and their partners have secured external funding to support the joint development of new course modules. The project being undertaken by the Family Rights Group, ATD Fourth World and Royal Holloway, University of London is an example of this approach.

## Example

**Involving families living in poverty in training social workers: A joint Family Rights Group, ATD Fourth World, Royal Holloway, University of London, and Families Living in Poverty project**

This group has come together for a one-year project that will work with families living in poverty who have experience as users of services in order to develop and pilot a poverty and exclusion training programme. They are focusing on this issue because families living in persistent poverty are particularly likely to experience social exclusion and social work interventions. The project is funded by the Department of Health, the Gulbenkian Foundation, SCIE and the Social Work and Social Policy Learning and Teaching Support Network (SWAP*ltsn*).

The Family Rights Group works with families, practitioners, researchers and policy makers to improve services for families whose children are involved with social services. ATD Fourth World is a human rights organisation that believes that only by working in partnership with families experiencing poverty and social exclusion can real and effective change come about in the lives of those most disadvantaged. Most of the families they work alongside with have experience of social services intervention and the care system. A wide group of family members who do not wish or initially lack the confidence to engage in direct teaching or policy forums participate in family workshops so that their voices may be heard. Royal Holloway, University of London Department of Health and Social Care provides both qualifying and post-qualifying social work courses and undertakes childcare research.

The project aims to produce:

- A model for involving families in the training of social workers that has been developed by families in partnership with some providers and users of training.

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- A training module on social work, poverty and social exclusion to be delivered by families living in poverty and academics that can be used in qualifying and post-qualifying training programmes, including practice teachers programmes, for children and families' social workers.
- Training for family members on increasing their own training and presentation skills.
- A model training programme for families who may become involved in training social workers.
- Increased confidence, skills and self-esteem for families attending the group.

The project's activities include:

- Establishing a working group made up of 8-10 family members from varied ethnic groups, four academics, two practitioners, a social services manager, ATD Fourth World, Family Rights Group, and at least one representative from the national bodies involved in developing social work education.
- Holding meetings of the working group on six days over the course of the year. Family members meet with ATD Fourth World and the Family Rights Group in the morning and are joined by the rest of the group in the afternoon.
- Holding six separate meetings of the family members with ATD Fourth World to prepare for the working group meetings, provide support, and undertake training on presentation and training skills.
- Preparing a literature review and drafting the academic component of the training programme (Royal Holloway staff).
- Piloting the training programme in Royal Holloway's qualifying and post-qualifying courses.
- Producing a report of its work and recommendations that will be relevant to other institutions and organisations considering the same challenges.

On completion of the project, the training programme will be tested further on the qualifying and post-qualifying social work courses at Royal Holloway and at least two other universities.

The findings of the project will be disseminated widely and the family members will be involved in all these activities. The final report will be available on the SCIE website (www.scie.org.uk) and the training module will be available on the Social Policy and Social Work Learning and Teaching Support Network (SWAP/*tsn*) website.

As the Royal Holloway example shows, designing training programmes from scratch with the active and ongoing participation of service users and their organisations requires a substantial investment of resources. This is distinct from sustaining service user participation in delivering training that is a longer-term activity.

## 11.4. Practice learning opportunities

The development work undertaken by national bodies and the degree programme providers shows that service user and carer organisations want to play a more active part in providing a range of practice learning opportunities[47,49].

The capacity of service user and carer organisations to offer practice learning needs

to be built up in the next three years, as many have not been previously involved. As part of this process, they may access the funding and training materials to support the induction to work-based learning and assessment for organisations new to practice learning being developed through Topss England. They could benefit also from working closely with social care employers that are experienced in practice learning and have a pool of practice teachers that could provide mentoring and support.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network has provided SCIE with a commentary on the ways that social work students benefit from placements within user-controlled organisations:

> "User-controlled organisations such as the Wiltshire and Swindon Users' Network already offer placements to students, and those at the Network have been very successful. User-controlled organisations demand of the students a willingness to question their value base and attitude in a way that is not possible within other placements. Issues of empowerment, rights, and responsibilities, and choice and control are perceived differently in user-controlled organisations, and the student acquires much learning towards making a more balanced judgement in assessment. With the inception of the new degree, it is important that user-controlled organisations continue to offer placements, and that the qualifications relating to the role of practice teacher are not so restricting that they exclude experienced practice teachers from continuing in this role within user-controlled organisations."

The Practice Learning Taskforce, set up by the Department of Health and hosted by Topss England, began a two-year project in January 2003 that aims to improve the quantity, quality and diversity of practice learning opportunities in partnership with all stakeholders in the degree programmes. In its first year it supported 72 regional development projects with funding from the Department of Health. Three of these projects focused specifically on involving service users and carers (University of Derby and Derbyshire Social Services, University of Plymouth, and Swindon Practice Development Centre). Working with service user and carer organisations was also included in the project themes on preparing for and generating new practice learning opportunities (eg University of Sunderland and New College Durham). The paper *Practice learning 'Everybody's business'* summarises the key messages from these projects, and gives signposts to the agencies/universities and project contact details[49]. Further information is available from the Taskforce (www.practicelearning.org).

The regional projects, the SCIE survey, and the preparatory focus groups[47] show consistently that service user and carer organisations could contribute to practice learning at each level over the three-year degree programme, provided that they are properly supported and paid. This includes the time students spend on preparation for practice, observation of practice, and their 200 assessed social work practice days.

Different levels of resources, commitment and methods apply to the range of practice learning opportunities. Initially, the activities will centre on preparation for practice, during which the student's capacity to act appropriately and safely in a practice environment is assessed. This will contribute to the HEI's statement of fitness to undertake formal practice learning. At this stage, service users and carers may make direct inputs into seminars or prepare materials, including videos of interviews or role plays, for use in individual study, skills laboratories and group work. Also, staff and individuals in service user and carer organisations may offer their own practice and circumstances for shadowing or observation by students, providing commentary and explanation[50].

Although many organisations do not have the capacity to offer an entire second or third year student practice opportunity, they may be able to contribute along with other agencies, provided that there is external support from experienced practice teachers and assessors.

The range of practice learning opportunities suggested by both service user and carer organisations includes the following:

- Students 'shadow' or follow service users, carers and their families for substantial periods of time. From observation and explanation, they learn directly about service users' and carers' daily lives and issues. Also, they learn about problem solving and resourcefulness.
- Students observe staff and members of service user and carer organisations at work. Through involvement in advocacy, helplines, support groups, and other direct services, they learn listening, assessment and communication skills. Opportunities with black and minority ethnic groups could increase both cultural awareness and understanding of the service user and carer perspective.
- Students interview service users, carers and staff in their organisations who in turn provide a commentary on their performance that can be fed into the assessment of their fitness for formal practice learning.

## Example

**University of Nottingham: Service user assessment of students**

In this approach, service users take the lead in the *Users' and Carers' Perspectives in Community Care* module aimed at second year students on the MA route as part of the 'adults' pathway.

What is distinctive about this module is that it is planned, delivered and assessed by service users and carers, who are paid for their services. The module thereby operates in partnership with a local organisation, *Advocacy in Action*, which has a long and trusted relationship with the university.

The aim of the module is that "students will be able to grasp the significance of the perspectives of service users and carers within community care. It is argued that social workers have historically not understood that users and carers are first and foremost *people,* with unique experiences and narratives. Through a process of experiential learning, the module will demonstrate that an understanding of these users and carers as people is an essential prerequisite for successful social work practice. The common theme of the module will be the shared humanity of social workers, service users and carers". The module raises the issues relating to the power dynamics of communication with service users, hence the importance of service user and carer-directed assessments.

The course is delivered in six one-day workshops. Eight or nine service users participate in each module, sharing their personal experiences. The last two workshops are assessment days. Students give a presentation of their life history, bearing in mind the communication skills they use. Some assessors may have

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learning difficulties or other disabilities. Students must take account of these issues in their presentations.

The grading is a percentage mark, based on the service users' judgement on how well the students have been able to engage in the themes of the module through their presentations. There is also a proportion of the mark awarded in recognition of the overall contributions of students to the module, judged by service users over the entire module. In 2001 and 2002, the coordinating tutor moderated the final mark awarded. For 2003, this tutor has been part of the teaching team and will therefore be part of the assessment process itself, with no consequent need for moderation of the marks.

- Students learn and practise the roles and tasks of managers, staff and members of the organisations, under supervision and as part of formal practice learning.
- Students are allocated discrete new projects that they can design and carry out themselves with supervision. They learn research, development, practice and partnership working skills. The projects are part of their assessed days of practice.

## 11.5. Assessment of students

Service users and carers want to be involved in assessing students as well as in teaching them and providing practice learning opportunities. Some Diploma in Social Work and post-qualifying programmes already have arrangements in place but the start of the degree programmes has prompted more joint work on systematic, explicit and formalised processes. Much of the activity has centred on the preparation for practice modules that will be delivered in the first year of the programme. There are plans to involve service users and carers fully in the second and third year and to ensure that they participate in the practice assessment panels.

As the student assessment process moves up the agenda and service users and carers are increasingly involved in its development, there are a lot of practicalities to be addressed. These include who makes the assessment, when, how and to whom? For example, is feedback given directly to the student by the service user, is it collated by the lecturer, the practice assessor or an independent person? Moreover, what weight will be attached to service users' and carers' assessments of student portfolios, especially when their opinions differ from those of tutors and practice assessors?

There is also scope for developing more creative methods for service user and carer participation in assessment. For example, several years ago Parsloe and Swift at the University of Bristol piloted and field-tested a method whereby service users, students, tutors and practice teachers independently assessed videos of student interviews with service users. The assessors rated their performance on 15 items and the researchers compared the ratings to see how far the different groups of assessors agreed about what is a good piece of work[14,51,52].

As part of the SCIE project, the National Organisation of Practice Teaching (NOPT) generously included a questionnaire in their March 2003 Newsletter, asking for members' experiences of service user and carer involvement in student assessment on placement. Twenty responses were received initially and the results were analysed and summarised by academic staff at Manchester Metropolitan University and Salford University. In order to take this further, a workshop was planned for the national conference to give practice teachers the opportunity to devise a format for service user/carer feedback. The

**National Organisation of Practice Teaching, March 2003**
*Survey of practice teachers' experiences of service user/carer involvement in student assessment on placement*

A range of responses were received from across England with the majority of practice teachers/work-based assessors having some experience of service user involvement in the assessment of students and around a third with 'considerable' experience. The majority of practice teachers received this feedback verbally, although some used a written, structured format to elicit these responses. One respondent asked the student to devise their own form for feedback, another using spontaneous comments from the service user at the end of the direct observation – after the student had left.

Key findings included:

- The most useful method would be a semi-structured format that could be administered by the practice teacher, student or work-based supervisor.
- The service user could complete this in writing *or* the practice teacher, student or work-based supervisor could ask verbal questions and record the service user's replies.
- One format can be devised to apply flexibly to all settings.
- Where particular communication issues present themselves, the practice teacher and student should devise appropriate methods of eliciting information.
- Sensitivity to service user needs and experience is important in the administration of any feedback process.
- Clear, understandable language should be used.
- Service user feedback is essential to give service users an authentic voice and to provide varied and balanced feedback for assessment.
- Feedback needs to be used by the practice teacher as a learning experience for the student.
- Service user feedback should be a requirement in making an assessment for *all* students in *any* setting.
- It is important for the practice teacher and the student to select the service user together, rather than the student alone.
- Careful preparation of the service user for involvement in this process is important and must include the right to refuse.
- Trigger questions linked to core competencies are not the aspects of student performance of most concern to service users – start from the service user perspective.
- The practice teacher has the task of translating feedback into evidence for the core competencies/national occupational standards.
- Service users should *not* be expected to identify aspects of the student's performance that need to be developed; that again is the practice teacher's task.

need to construct guidelines for good practice in this area was also identified. The report for the NOPT newsletter is summarised here.

Several of the Practice Learning Taskforce regional development projects considered how service users and carers could participate in assessment (www.practicelearning.org):

- The University of Plymouth held practice learning workshops at which service users and carers made invaluable contributions. Students on this programme will interview one or more service users as part of their assessment as being ready for practice learning experience. The service users will be asked to give feedback on their performance and verify that the student's report is accurate. Service users and carers are playing a vital part in devising the assessment method and draft guidelines, *Initial assessment of 'Readiness for practice learning,* have been produced. Service user, carer, and student involvement has been instrumental in keeping documentation and discussion jargon-free.

- The Swindon Practice Development Centre focused attention, through consultations with voluntary sector projects, on service user feedback in the assessment of students in Years 1 and 2. They agreed seven headings for feedback that will be incorporated into the assessments.

- The University of East Anglia developed tools for monitoring practice learning. These are a placement assessment form, a monitoring form, and a student and service user feedback form.

- Finally, service user, carer and other organisations that work on more than one programme have pointed out the procedures and processes, including those for assessment, are usually different. The West Midlands, and the University of Hull and University of Lincoln regional projects sought to develop more similar or integrated approaches.

## 11.6. Quality assurance

As part of their comprehensive strategy, programmes have set up partnership or management boards to oversee all stages of design and delivery of the degree, including quality assurance. The service user and carer members participate along with others in developing these mechanisms. Only at the end of the first year of the degree programme, will it be possible to compare emerging approaches, and assess how they work. In 2006, when the first social work degrees are awarded, fuller information will become available on how service user and carer involvement in quality assurance works and the value that it adds to the processes and their outcomes.

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# Next steps

Many universities and colleges offering the degree programmes in England in 2003 and their allies in service user and carer organisations have made a good start at working together, but progress is uneven across the country and the specific aspects of the programmes. In November 2003, the GSCC and SCIE held a joint conference entitled 'Living and Learning Together', to promote and share different approaches to service user and carer involvement. Ten workshops were planned and delivered by social work lecturers and their service user and carer partners. The report of the conference proceedings that will be published shortly after this guide shows that imaginative ways of involving service users and carers have been achieved. These include partnerships with children and young people, asylum seekers, people with learning difficulties, parents and carers, and the use of drama and poetry.

In the move towards active and systematic service user and carer participation in social work education, the areas for attention include:

- *Building and sustaining capacity:* in order that the initiative may realise its potential, priority should be attached to building up the capacity of both service user and carer organisations and degree programme providers for joint working. Ring-fenced funding is one of the levers to facilitate this development.

- *Training and support:* training for service user and carer trainers is high on the agenda of their organisations. This includes support for these organisations to develop their own training and support systems and the development at a national level of accredited training leading to qualifications.

- *Payment* of service users and carers is a complicated area. Practice varies across the country and some guidance is required.

- *Codes of practice* may help to promote and monitor fair treatment and good quality processes and outcomes.

- *Evaluation:* a wide variety of different approaches to service user and carer participation are emerging. Programme providers and their partners need to have robust systems for tracking, monitoring, reviewing and revising their approaches. Research is required to assess the effectiveness of these approaches in terms of processes and outcomes.

The first three years of service user and carer participation in the degree afford everyone involved the opportunity to experiment in their approaches, build up a body of knowledge and experience, and assess how it makes a difference to social work education, practice and, above all, its outcomes for service users and carers. Arrangements for sharing experiences and learning from each other may move these developments forward creatively and sustain them. Further developments in service user and carer involvement must surely be based on the values and principles of service user organisations and seek to widen participation.

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## Involving service users and carers in social work education

Better outcomes for service users and carers are fundamental to the recent reforms in social work education. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is supporting the new degree in social work by providing a series of reviews and guides on the best way of educating and training social workers.

This Resource guide outlines ways of involving service users and carers in all aspects of the design and delivery of the social work degree programmes. It focuses on how partnerships between higher education institutions (HEIs) and service user and carer organisations can be developed and sustained. It covers the values, principles and practicalities of participation, outlining a range of approaches to creating active and purposeful partnerships.

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