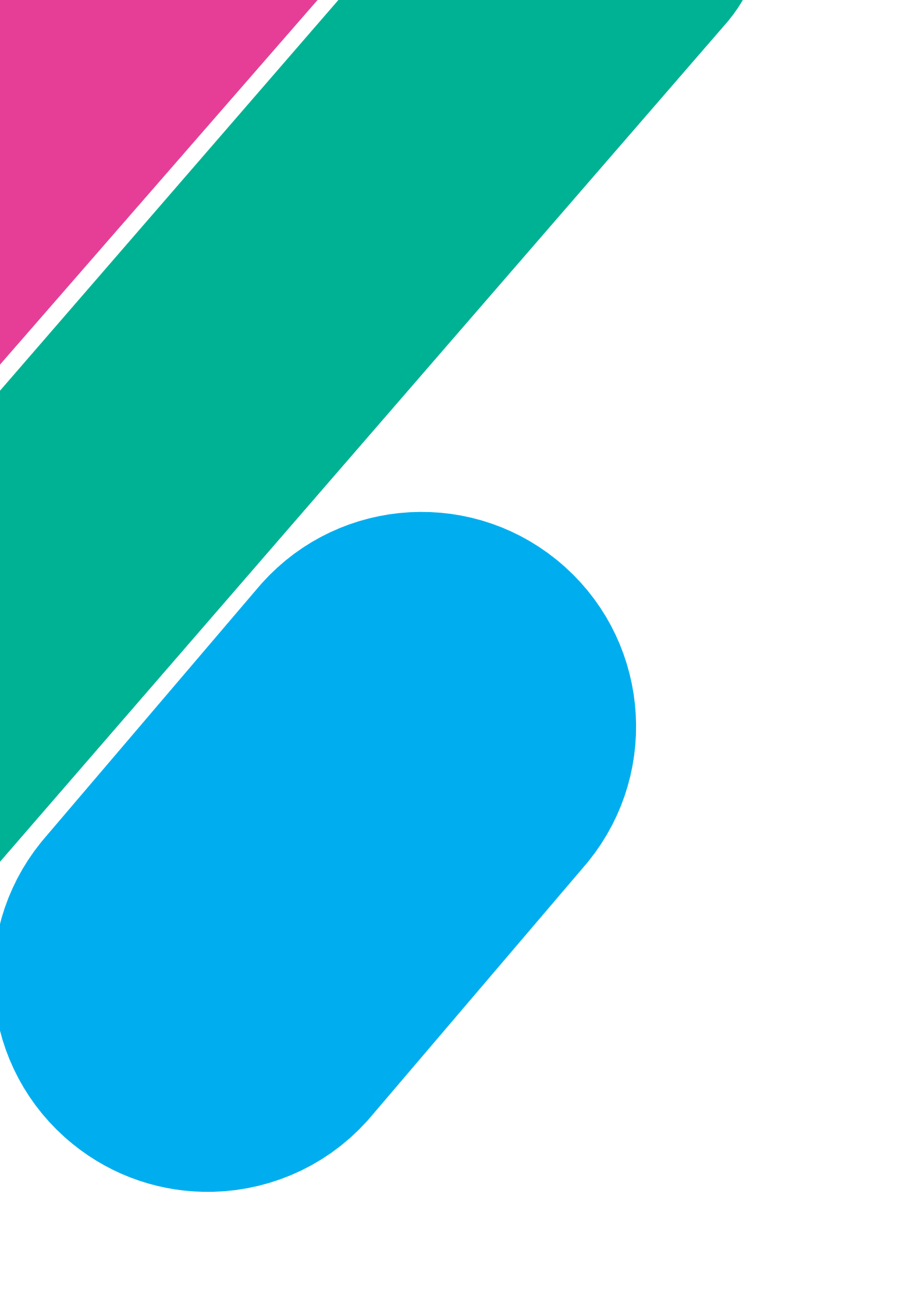


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Undertaking the role of Chief Social Work Officer

Sharing knowledge from practice 2016



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Introduction

These materials have been developed as part of a set of developments intended to support those undertaking the role of Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) or aspiring to take on the role. The work was developed as a result of shared interest in supporting those in the role by the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, Scottish Government and Social Work Scotland.

Development of the materials was led and supported by Social Work Scotland with resource provided by the Care Inspectorate which funded a part time secondment to Social Work Scotland.

The role of the Chief Social Work Officer is set out in Guidance issued by Scottish Ministers (revised version published in July 2016). This resource is intended to complement and support the Guidance and also other developments intended to support the role of Chief Social Work Officer and the associated strategic and professional leadership responsibilities inherent in the role, including:

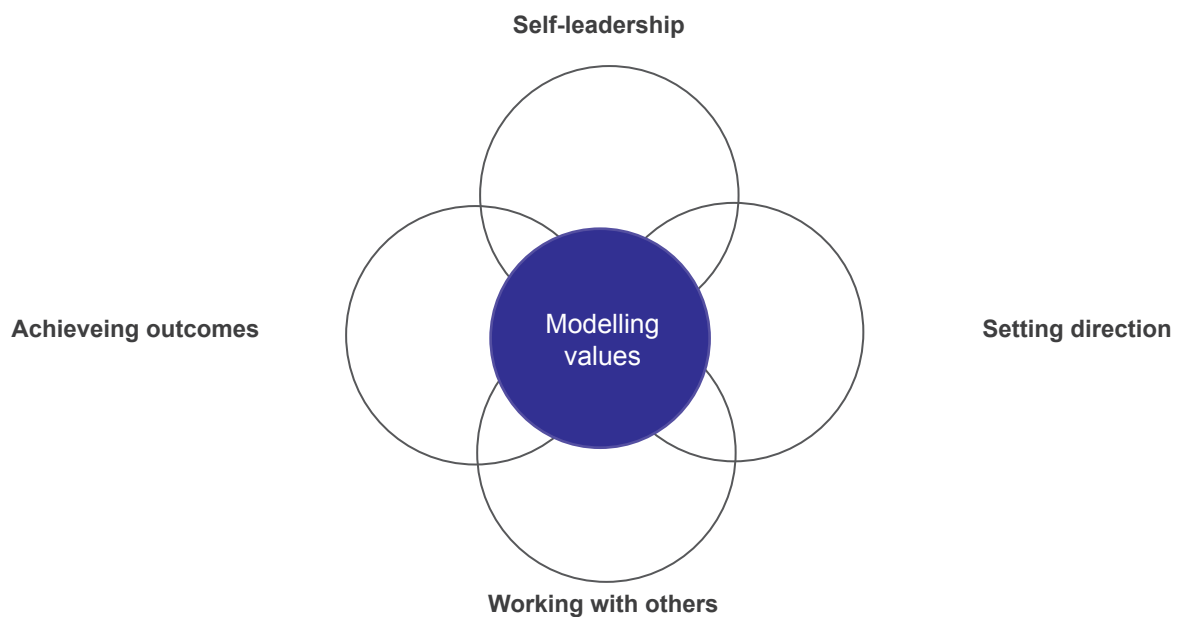
- The Standard underpinning the qualification for Chief Social Work Officers (issued by the Scottish Social Services Council in July 2015)
- The Post Graduate Diploma for Chief Social Work Officers (CSWO Award) currently being delivered jointly by Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Dundee

These materials are aligned to the 5 aspects of the Standard for Chief Social Work Officers and consist of experience and practice examples shared by 30 Chief Social Work Officers interviewed in post between July to September 2016, as well as comments and insights about undertaking the role, with further examples from practice recorded in Appendix 1.

The Chief Social Work Officer Standard

The Chief Social Work Officer Standard is based on the specific requirements of the role of the Chief Social Work Officer. The Standard aims to reflect the roles and responsibilities of Chief Social Work Officers and is intended to be both a reference point and the foundation for the delivery and assessment of the Postgraduate Diploma: Chief Social Work Officer.

Around the core of 'modelling social work values', there are 4 aspects of the Standard. Each of the aspects has attached to it an overall descriptor and a number of competencies, which overlap, and these materials will outline examples from practice which illustrate each element of the Standard.



These materials are structured in line with the above five elements.

The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer

As the leader of the social work profession in each local authority area, Chief Social Work Officers recognise the privilege inherent in their position: setting direction for the profession, acting as enabling leaders, engendering aspirations for the sector and inspiring others to also be excellent leaders. Chief Social Work Officers understand the direct link between robust, effective leadership and outstanding performance in services.

Working as an integral leading part of a senior management team brings unique opportunities to influence change in practice for the benefit of those using services, accompanied by the inherent authority to implement those changes necessary to support practice and affect best outcomes for people using services. Chief Social Work Officers advise, develop and enable others to deliver the highest level of operational practice while remaining accountable for the attainment of excellent professional standards across social care and social work services, focussing on their role in setting the strategic direction of the services and developing the organisational vision to which all staff will adhere.

Using skills in self leadership, creativity, innovation, empowerment and influencing, as well as excellent communication skills and emotional intelligence, Chief Social Work Officers set the culture to inspire colleagues to share the vision, acting as the driving force for the sector.

The national context

Scotland's National Performance Framework (Scotland Performs) sets out the five strategic outcomes and sixteen national outcomes which will focus Scottish Government and public services on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all. Social services, as part of the public sector landscape, must support the delivery of these strategic outcomes which will ensure that Scotland is wealthier and fairer, smarter, healthier, safer and stronger and greener. The national outcomes provide a set of indicators to support a broad measure of national and societal wellbeing and incorporate a range of data across an economic, societal and environmental indicator framework.

Leading a sector which shares a set of values and principles which include ethics, professional integrity, respect for human rights and a commitment to promoting social justice, Chief Social Work Officers are responsible for the delivery of excellent professional standards across social care and social work services towards meeting the national outcomes within the above framework.

Vision and context

'Social Services in Scotland: a shared vision and strategy 2015 – 2020' highlights the unique contribution of social services in providing the essential support necessary to meet the needs of the most vulnerable communities and individuals.

As the professional leader for social care and social work services in each area, the Chief Social Work Officer is responsible for ensuring services are delivered in a way which takes account of a human rights approach, and one in which the principles of social justice are applied through tackling inequality and disadvantage, working collaboratively and in partnership with colleagues across sectors and involving communities and individuals who receive services, and those who care for them. The 'Vision and Strategy' states that "Within this context, the importance of robust and effective social services is crucial to the delivery of a socially just Scotland where people are able to feel safe, to flourish and to experience improved opportunities and a better quality of life".

Professional responsibilities

Views gathered during the production of this resource identified some shared perspectives of this aspect of the Chief Social Work Officer role. Chief Social Work Officers have a 'duality' of role: all are in substantive posts which have strategic responsibility for oversight of professional standards in social work services, as well as undertaking the leadership of the profession through the Chief Social Work Officer function.

It can be challenging for Chief Social Work Officers to maintain boundaries between the two aspects of their role: their substantive post and their Chief Social Work Officer role. There are occasions when a Chief Social Work Officer may require to have more involvement in operational aspects of the service, especially where issues are particularly complex and statutory advice is required, however it is vital to understand the interface between operational and strategic service delivery and to support staff to effectively lead delivery of services.

Chief Social Work Officers seek to empower senior managers, working collaboratively with a focus on learning. Where necessary, Chief Social Work Officers will require to challenge professional practice and managerial decision making, making appropriate use of their authority to do so. Where this occurs, they will encourage learning and development through reflective discussions and constructive debate about high risk and other professionally challenging issues.

For some, the Chief Social Work Officer role also takes them into an area of work for which they may not be directly responsible in a managerial or delivery sense.

For instance, if a Chief Social Work Officer is a Head of Service in Children's Services in a local authority area in which children's services are not part of integrated arrangements with Health, the Chief Social Work Officer, although attending the Integration Joint Board as a non-voting member, has no operational responsibilities for services represented but must still represent social work services as a whole, through quality assurance, professional leadership and the duties inherent in the Chief Social Work Officer function.

This requires a Chief Social Work Officer to develop and maintain excellent relationships with social care and social work peers to ensure he/she can effectively raise appropriate

issues for consideration, and assure the Integration Joint Board members of the effectiveness of social care and social work delivery, based on the principles of effective risk management and social work values.

In terms of providing professional leadership, those interviewed to inform these materials identified core and specific aspects to the role of Chief Social Work Officer:

Advice-giving

The Chief Social Work Officer has an advice-giving role to social work and social care services, and where integrated services are delivered and advice is required in order to ensure adherence to legislative requirements as it pertains to the appropriate, effective and timely discharge of local authorities' statutory social work duties and delivery of services to people in, what can be, very complex circumstances. This advice is given to enhance professional leadership and accountability by providing a key support to the local authority and partner agencies to enable them to make decisions which balance needs, rights and risk.

Values and standards

Delivering the Chief Social Work Officer role requires enabling others to understand that strategic decisions must take cognisance of the values and standards required in social work practice. The Chief Social Work Officer is responsible for promoting the values and standards of professional social work practice on a single agency and partnership basis, ensuring that standards are communicated, reviewed regularly and met in the discharge of the social work task.

Managing risk

In ensuring the highest standards of social work practice are delivered, the Chief Social Work Officer is responsible for ensuring appropriate governance processes are in place which support effective evidence-based decision-making, specifically as they pertain to the assessment and management of risk. In managing risk effectively, competing rights, needs and civil liberties must be considered and the Chief Social Work officer, in setting high standards for practice governance, must ensure the framework for delivery of effective risk management is in place and supported.

Principles of empowering operational staff

As professional leader, Chief Social Work Officers must be clear – and engender clarity in others – about the interface between oversight of professional standards and strategic direction of services. Although there will be occasions where Chief Social Work Officers become involved in operations, it is imperative that they do so within the boundaries of their role as professional leader, giving statutory advice and providing the leadership and direction required to resolve complex decisions. The following are core principles identified to support this:

- Leading, supporting and empowering senior managers to understand and undertake their role
- Making concerted efforts to ensure open, regular and honest communication with all staff to enable them to feel connected to their Chief Social Work Officer
- Thinking about when and how to use the title of Chief Social Work Officer, using it as appropriate to convey the authority inherent in the role, and using integrity, actions and decisions to demonstrate the role and as a means of strengthening the voice of social work
- Considering when, why and how to become involved in particular cases, using their role in inquiry to establish that professional standards are being implemented. The Chief Social Work Officer should empower senior managers to make decisions, challenging if/when required; support staff to work out particularly complex issues; and act as a 'sounding board'; all the while maintaining sole senior accountability for professional standards of practice in social work services
- Giving (and seeking) professional advice as and when required
- Promoting best outcomes for people through ensuring a fundamental core social work values base in all aspects of single and multi-agency working
- Auditing practice and being satisfied that professional standards have been met or are being sufficiently progressed

- Ensuring that all staff are sufficiently equipped, supported, qualified and developed to undertake their jobs effectively
- Promoting excellent practice through sharing and encouraging learning across the sector

Principles of developing a strategic vision

Chief Social Work Officers interviewed described the different ways in which they contribute to setting a strategic vision across the field of integrated service planning, delivery and evaluation and the varied ways in which integrated structures are delivered in local areas.

Regardless of structures, Chief Social Work Officers have an influencing and negotiating role to ensure the contribution and value of social work is recognised as a key part of the agenda for integrated services, strengthening cross-sector partnerships and acting as a catalyst for change in services to the benefit of those using them.

In expanding on the aspects outlined in the revised Guidance for Chief Social Work Officers, interviewees identified their strategic responsibilities as involving the following principles:

- To act, in many cases, as a single point of strategic contact within social work services for all professionals, ensuring the vision and direction for social work services is clear, transparent and effectively communicated
- To give reassurance to governance bodies about the proper discharge of the social work task, being clear about challenges and achievements towards this
- To actively support and lead governance processes, managing risk in service delivery and giving advice required to enable colleagues to make effective, safe, appropriate and timely decisions
- To give professional leadership to all social work staff and all staff from multiple disciplines working in social work services, leading a 'one team' approach
- To give statutory advice in relation to social work, learning lessons with colleagues from issues raised, challenges encountered or excellent practice experienced
- To hold accountability for the effective delivery of professional standards in social work and social care services and in the discharge of the social work task, and working collaboratively with senior managers to achieve best outcomes for people
- To support the Council to achieve its outcomes as they relate to social work services
- To effectively represent the local authority social work service at strategic, local and national levels
- To be highly politically astute
- To effectively promote the social work task to those within and out with the profession
- To foster and nurture excellent professional working relationships with all partner agencies
- To be an excellent communicator and negotiator, using a high degree of influencing skills through single agency and integrated processes and being visible to partners

Modelling values

Social work values include the moral concepts of rights, responsibility, freedom, authority and power inherent in the practice of social workers as moral and statutory agents, as well as exploring the complex relationships between justice, care and control in social welfare. Further issues arise in respect of the practical and ethical implications of these, including roles as statutory agents, as well as in upholding the law in respect of discrimination. Chief Social Work Officers are required to model these values. They should:

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of core social work values and professional ethics
- Take responsibility for the promotion of core social work values within multi-agency contexts
- Use a range of advanced and specialised skills to actively communicate and promote social work values to staff
- Model and communicate those values to a range of audiences that include politicians, people that use services and their representatives, other agencies and their own staff
- Advocate for the most vulnerable in the community
- Demonstrate the ability to deal with complex ethical and professional issues.

Examples given by Chief Social Work Officers in relation to this aspect of the Standard are aligned to the following categories:

1. Communication and emotional intelligence
2. Understanding and celebrating difference
3. Terminology
4. Learning and developing

1. Communication and emotional intelligence

For all Chief Social Work Officers, good communication and emotional intelligence skills are integral to supporting constructively challenging, positive and multi-disciplinary arrangements and relationships.

These skills include the ability to negotiate and influence across a wide audience; challenge where social work values are not clear; support and empower others; recognise abilities and strengths in others, and focus on these, rather than on areas which cause challenge. The ability to listen actively and well (and to use silence well), is valuable. Knowing when to say you don't have the expert knowledge required is fundamental to role modelling, with the ability to follow this up being key to engendering trusting relationships.

Using the title of 'Chief Social Work Officer' appropriately and supportively is a strength in being able to articulate the role: the title provides clarity and transparency regarding the statutory functions, including the giving of professional advice. The Chief Social Work Officer should ensure partners are clear about the functions of the role, its boundaries, its statutory nature, and the interface between these and the Chief Social Work Officer's substantive role.

The Chief Social Work Officer holds a statutory authority different to professional advisers in other sectors, so it is imperative that Officers effectively articulate their role across multi- agency partnerships.

To support understanding of the role with partner agencies, Chief Social Work Officers identified the following as useful methods of communication:

- Attending team meetings, induction or events
- Writing regular blogs and briefings for staff
- Having an online forum
- Meeting students and newly qualified staff
- Having fortnightly 'open door' sessions
- Initiating direct contact with staff to discuss specific cases in order to learn more
- Undertaking 'walkabouts'
- Physically working from different offices to retain visibility
- Leading a social work practitioner forum
- Leading and facilitating local staff events, inviting relevant speakers to support staff development
- Holding Chief Social Work Officer sessions annually to ascertain what is challenging staff, what their ideas are, discussing what they have done to improve things and how the Chief Social Work Officer can offer further support
- Having an 'ideas wall' open to all staff to make suggestions on particular change processes or projects

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer talked about “standing up for your people”. In the situation of facing a tragedy in the local authority area, which can often result in a search for blame, the role of the Chief Social Work Officer as a senior leader is to take accountability and responsibility, ask if they have done enough to ensure that people were equipped to do their jobs to the best of their abilities and understand how people will be feeling. It is important to separate the actions needing to be taken from the care required.

In one example, the death of a child in care attracted much adverse media attention. The Chief Social Work Officer was required to recognise the different ‘process and people’ elements which all needed priority and care. The Chief Executive and Council Leader needed to be briefed, communications required to be submitted to Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate, an investigation had to be initiated to understand the sequence of events and decisions taken, an initial case review needed to be established by the public protection committee and there were corporate tasks to undertake. In the midst of this, there were staff who were trying to come to terms with what had happened, and were grieving, while being immersed in Police enquiries.

The role of the Chief Social Work Officer was to be supportive throughout all these different processes and actions and to maintain integrity when the social work service was being challenged. This required a variety of skills: organisational, communication, caring, diplomacy and counselling, in order to pay attention to everyone’s needs and assure the Council’s reputation.

The personal impact of situations like this, and other complex events in the life of the vulnerable users of services whom the Chief Social Work Officer encounters, require great emotional intelligence and self-care.

2. Understanding and celebrating difference

It is important that Chief Social Work Officers promote and celebrate the professional identity of social work alongside a recognition of the inherent and distinct uniqueness of all caring professions. Within this, articulation of what makes the social work profession different (in the same way that other agencies recognise the uniqueness of their role) is integral to fostering and understanding across services in order to engender robust professional relationships.

In integrated environments, it was felt that taking a starting position based on best outcomes for people who use services was of fundamental importance, then understanding which agencies and individuals can best meet that need, being clear about the boundaries of the social work task and the expert nature of all professionals involved.

This can also be done by the Chief Social Work Officer promoting the social work task, for instance by holding to core social work values through integrated processes or actively sharing information about the role of social work.

Example

A Chief Social Work Officer spoke about attending the local university to speak to social work students about what it means to be a social worker, policy drivers for social work, and working in social work services within an integrated environment, as well as discussing local issues, including the way in which the Council supports both students on placement and newly qualified social workers. This discussion was two-way: it enabled the Chief Social Work Officer to speak about that role and to hear first-hand the expectations of students and newly qualified social workers, as well as observing their passion, commitment and motivation to the role.

3. Terminology

Chief Social Work Officers recognised that all sectors often use language, jargon or terminology which can become sector-specific but not easily understood out with that sector and that it was important, in working collaboratively, to establish a shared language and understanding. This also includes understanding the importance of all partners constructively challenging each other in instances when language is acting as a barrier to true partnership working.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer had been aware of a senior criminal justice manager referring to those using the service by their surname and talking about the 'processing' of people. The Chief Social Work Officer began to challenge this through a Multi-Agency Public Protection

Arrangements (MAPPA) meeting, referring to 'Justice Services' and supporting a move from a 'command and control' style of management to a recognition of human rights.

The Chief Social Work Officer achieved this by focussing the meeting on the strengths of the individual and asking about his aspirations and how these could be supported by the multi- agency team. Now the service talks about outcomes for people and different methods have been explored to develop services further: a theatre workshop was held which involved people with convictions and staff, in which all expressed their vulnerabilities and developed together.

4. Learning and developing

Chief Social Work Officers are aware of their need to have an overview of all aspects of the social work service, yet not expect to be an expert across all areas. The important thing is recognising who, among your senior team, holds which areas of the expertise required, and encouraging their development to affect your own. This extends to gathering a trusted team round about when a situation proves complex.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer was approached by a senior manager about a complex case involving legal services, criminal justice services and children's services: one young person became subject to supervision through the Children's Hearing System while being supported to have unsupervised contact with his father, who was on licence and himself being supported by criminal justice services. Unsupervised contact was promoted by the father's legal representative.

The social worker in criminal justice services made it clear the young person was at risk if the contact between him and his father remained unsupervised and approached the senior manager who, in turn, sought advice from the Chief Social Work Officer. The Officer then reviewed all the relevant legislation and sought advice from Scottish Government regarding elements of legislation in relation to both criminal justice and children. The Children's Panel, however, decided to support unsupervised contact despite risks being raised.

The Chief Social Work Officer supported the criminal justice social worker and the decision was taken to inform the father that, were he to see his child unsupervised, a breach report would be issued to Court. In this situation, local arrangements were made to address the rights of those concerned and, primarily, the safety of the child, however, complexities existed – and continued to exist – in the interpretation and implementation of the various pieces of legislation.



Setting direction

This aspect of the Chief Social Work Officer Standard relates to the ability of the Chief Social Work Officer to set direction, both for the services for which they are responsible and for those delivered in partnership with others. It has 5 aspects set out below which describe how Chief Social Work Officers need to operate in order to perform their role effectively:

Reading the context

A Chief Social Work Officer demonstrates a critical understanding of the context within which they are working, as well as an evidence-informed reading of the dynamic and complex nature of that context. They seek, and critically analyse, a wide range of data relating to the delivery of social work services; anticipate and prepare for the future, dealing with complex issues, sometimes in the absence of complete data; engage effectively with local politicians and community representatives, demonstrating leadership and organisational astuteness and make a significant contribution to change and development; anticipate and actively explore the financial context of services and demonstrate critical awareness of the national context of social work services.

Creating the vision

A Chief Social Work Officer is able to use a range of specialised skills, clearly articulate and communicate the strategic vision for the services for which they are responsible. They create, and are able to communicate, a vision that reflects core social work values; demonstrates the ability to work effectively with partners to develop a shared vision; ensure that the vision is informed by the promotion of a culture of excellence and ensure that a culture is created which allows staff and people who use services to take risks appropriately.

Embodying the vision

A Chief Social Work Officer embodies the strategic vision for social work services and is able to provide strong and trustworthy leadership towards the achievement of that vision. They promote behaviour in others that is consistent with the vision; act as a role model for the vision and demonstrate confidence and self-belief in respect of the vision.

Communicating the vision

A Chief Social Work Officer has a clear understanding of the impact of their strategic vision on the way in which services are offered to people who use services, their carers and the communities that are served. They are able to clearly articulate and communicate the vision in a range of contexts and for different audiences; take responsibility for ensuring that

awareness of the vision is promoted both within and out with the organisation and demonstrate leadership in building support for the vision.

Managing change

A Chief Social Work Officer demonstrates the ability to lead and manage change well. They clearly communicate the need for change and inspire commitment to the change process; make a clear and identifiable contribution to the process of change; retain a focus on people who use services and their carers during the change process; clearly communicate with those concerned by change

throughout the process and demonstrate responsiveness to the concerns of those affected by change.

Examples given by Chief Social Work Officers in relation to this aspect of the Standard are aligned to the following categories:

1. Communicating with people
2. Holding values-based conversations and events
3. Being prepared to challenge

1. Communicating with people

Chief Social Work Officers recognise the importance and fundamental role of setting a shared direction and vision, and of translating this accurately, effectively and transparently to all staff, for the benefit of those using services. This includes recognising a participative role in setting strategic direction across integrated arrangements with partners, as well as setting internal direction for social work services.

As well as the elements of maintaining visibility and communicating with people described elsewhere, Chief Social Work Officers have other examples of the ways in which they set the direction for the social work service and work together with partners and staff to bring this to fruition.

Example

Recognising that setting a clear vision starts with clarity at frontline practice, one Chief Social Work Officer spoke of leading and delivering input at sessions for all students in social work placements in the local authority and at induction sessions for new staff and newly qualified social workers.

These sessions were interactive, the purpose of which was to set the tone for honest debate about the social work task, enable facilitator and audience to be open to challenge and to ensure that visibility and accessibility needed to maintain a 'thread' through senior decision makers to practitioners.

2. Holding values-based conversations and events

Chief Social Work Officers recognise the need to ensure conversations about practice remain values-based and support others to maintain this, using influencing and communication skills or constructive challenge if required.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer stated that, in situations where language used becomes about 'delayed discharges' or 'bed days lost' and the focus is on statistical interpretations and targets, instead of people and the quality of care they receive, and their outcomes, it is vital to introduce a different language into the conversation.

This Chief Social Work Officer gave the example of repeatedly and explicitly using the language of outcomes in all fora which multidisciplinary colleagues attended in order to bring a different language to the table and to support colleagues to use different terminology which placed the individual receiving services at the heart of care. The Chief Social Work Officer described this as being consistent in approach in order to influence the discussions and, after a time, colleagues began to use the language of outcomes for people. One instance of this was a session in which the Integration Joint Board worked together to develop a joint quality action plan which explicitly described outcomes. This action plan formed the basis of a framework to measure achievement in delivering a new way of working.

3. Being prepared to challenge

Chief Social Work Officers recognise the role they have in challenging poor practice to establish the way they wish things to move forward. Many of the Chief Social Work Officers in post in 2016 had been in post less than 3 years and had fresh memories of the cultures, structures and practice which they entered, and which they felt had to be developed and challenged in order to change and to better promote professional social work leadership, standards and values.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer spoke of a previous culture in which some elected members had taken a keen interest in personal care plans belonging to those using the service, requesting to review these, to which previous colleagues had agreed. Elected members had also been heavily influenced in this local area by community feeling, particularly with regard to a group of young people who were viewed as 'troublemakers', with the result that the young people were not only accommodated, but were accommodated in another local authority area away from their own community and families. Reviews of care had not taken place, leading to frustration and anger on the part of families and young people and the local authority's financial budget had increased to unmanageable levels.

On taking up post, the Chief Social Work Officer, after gaining an overview of the situation, started to challenge practitioners, managers and elected members about this practice. Working from a basis of reviewing together with senior managers what was in the best interests of young people, slowly out of area placements were reduced and young people were supported to come back to the local authority area, looking at best use of all local resources to support them. Simultaneously, the Chief Social Work Officer sought the support of Social Work Scotland, and guidance around releasing information to elected members was developed. The Chief Social Work Officer also started a process of saying "no" to elected members who stepped beyond their remit; and challenging professionals across sectors who found the outcomes-based approach difficult to practice.

The Chief Social Work Officer described this as taking a 'command and control' approach before being in a position to become an enabler for others to make their own decisions.

Achieving outcomes

This aspect of the Chief Social Work Officer Standard relates directly to achieving outcomes for social work services, those people who use these services and their carers. It has 4 aspects set out below which describe how Chief Social Work Officers need to operate in order to perform their role effectively

Managing resources

A Chief Social Work Officer takes responsibility for the use of available resources, or influences the management of those resources in a creative but prudent way. They take responsibility for ensuring that clear structures are in place to effectively manage resources directly under their control; take responsibility for decisive action when resources are not being used effectively or efficiently; demonstrate that they have a clear commissioning strategy in place that is guided by Best Value principles and demonstrate the effective use of influencing skills in respect of resources not directly under their control.

Managing people

A Chief Social Work Officer makes the best use of the human resources that are available to them. They take responsibility for ensuring that there are clear policies in place for human resource management; take responsibility for ensuring that a learning culture is in place for the organisation; demonstrate commitment to the learning and development of staff and maintain a focus on improving outcomes for people who use services and their carers.

Managing performance

Through ensuring a focus on outcomes, Chief Social Work Officers have clear mechanisms in place to appraise, report on and manage, performance. They demonstrate optimum use of available information, both quantitative and qualitative; ensure structures and processes are in place to critically reflect upon experience and demonstrate a commitment to self-evaluation throughout the organisation.

Managing risk

Chief Social Work Officers have well-developed arrangements in place to assess and manage risk, both within social work services and in inter-agency contexts. They demonstrate leadership in inter-agency safeguarding and risk management fora; demonstrate a clear knowledge of the legislative framework within which risk is managed; take responsibility for ensuring that systems and processes are in place to assess and manage risk as effectively as possible; take responsibility for ensuring that frontline staff and managers receive the support that they require to manage risk; demonstrate the ability to deal with complex ethical issues and make informed judgements in areas of uncertainty; recognise that there may be tensions and conflict and that there may not always be one right answer and, where required to make decisions directly, do so ensuring that they have access to the best available information, whilst at the same time recognising that decisions may require to be made in the absence of complete information.

All Chief Social Work Officers operate to achieve best outcomes for people who use services. Examples given by Chief Social Work Officers in relation to this aspect of the Standard are aligned to the following categories:

1. Transforming services
2. Supporting people's rights
3. Reviewing internal resources to support outcomes
4. Effectively evaluating services

1. Transforming services

Chief Social Work Officers spoke about reviewing services to achieve better outcomes for people and delivering different interventions which were also new practices:

Example

One local authority area has been considering implementation of The Wave Trust 70/30 campaign, with the support of the Dartington Social Research Unit, which aims to reduce child maltreatment in the UK by 70% by the year 2030. The programme operates from a preventative and early intervention approach and helps address issues around parenting, within a nurturing environment. The role of the Chief Social Work Officer is to help identify where, in the local authority area, investment is best placed to achieve the aims.

It is acknowledged that this is a long term programme with outcomes not being evident until, perhaps, a generation's time, however the programme is supported by theory and practice knowledge about best outcomes for children and young people and sits well with other policy drivers, including the Curriculum for Excellence.

2. Supporting people's rights

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer was approached by a mental health officer and a community care colleague with regard to a complex request regarding an individual with a learning disability, without capacity, who was supported by social work services. The individual's brother had approached the service seeking access to his medical records to ascertain if a condition he had was genetic. This situation involved social work and health colleagues and resulted in a discussion about how best to balance and respect the rights of both the individual using services and his brother.

For the Chief Social Work Officer, the important aspect was to facilitate the discussion involving the relevant professionals without micro managing or offering a decision, but keeping the outcomes of the individual at the heart of the conversation.

3. Reviewing internal resources to support outcomes

Example

Following a review of two residential care homes in one local authority area, one Chief Social Work Officer was challenging the resulting discussion about potentially closing one home in order to make financial savings. The Chief Social Work Officer framed the discussion in terms of outcomes for people currently using the care home and potential future users of care: closure of one care home would result in inequitable access to care; and the Council's duty, through the role of the Chief Social Work Officer, should be to focus on quality in care, protection of those using care services and protection of the Council's reputation.

4. Effectively evaluating services

Chief Social Work Officers spoke about the ways in which they seek to manage the performance of the services for which they are responsible.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer discussed how, in the local authority, the Care Inspectorate Quality Indicator Framework for joint strategic inspections was used as a self-evaluation tool for the children's services for which they had responsibility and to design an action plan for improvement.



Self leadership

This aspect of the Standard is about establishing and developing the personal qualities of the Chief Social Work Officer. It has four aspects:

Self-awareness and critical reflection

A Chief Social Work Officer is self-aware. They demonstrate the ability to recognise and articulate their own values and principles, understanding how these may differ from those of other disciplines and agencies; demonstrate a strong sense of their own professionalism and confidence in their own authority; demonstrate a critical awareness of their own strengths and limitations and the impact of their behaviour on others; take responsibility for their own emotions and prejudices and understand how these can affect their judgement and behaviour; take responsibility for obtaining, analysing and acting on feedback from a range of sources and demonstrate the ability to critically reflect on their leadership and management practice.

Managing self

Chief Social Work Officers demonstrate a personal resilience and confidence, particularly in the face of challenging circumstances. They critically reflect upon the impact of their behaviour on others; demonstrate reliability in meeting their responsibilities; demonstrate a commitment to consistently high standards and demonstrate creativity by ensuring that their plans and actions are flexible and take account of the needs and work patterns of others.

Integrity

Chief Social Work Officers behave in an open, honest and ethical manner. They demonstrate the ability to uphold personal and professional ethics and values; communicate effectively with staff, community representatives and people who use services; demonstrate the upholding of social work values, the respecting and promotion of equality and diversity; demonstrate an appropriate use of authority and demonstrate the ability to take appropriate action if ethics and values are compromised.

Continuing professional development

A Chief Social Work Officer takes responsibility for their professional development. They actively seek opportunities and challenges for personal learning and development; critically reflect upon errors and treat them as learning opportunities; take responsibility for their own participation in continuing professional development activities; demonstrate the ability

to adapt their behaviour in the light of feedback and reflection; demonstrate a commitment to high standards and quality service improvement on the basis of the best available evidence and demonstrate the ability to apply learning they have gained in practice.

Examples given by Chief Social Work Officers in relation to this aspect of the Standard are aligned to the following categories:

1. Supporting initial learning
2. Finding their feet

3. Being self-aware
4. Responding when things go wrong
5. Self-evaluation

1. Supporting initial learning:

For the majority of Chief Social Work Officers in post in 2016, induction into the role was described as either minimal or non-existent. While recognising the need for self directed learning, the knowledge required in the role also demanded an immediate need to 'hit the ground running'. In order to meet the challenge, Chief Social Work Officers use a variety of ways to orientate themselves into the role, including:

- Arranging induction meetings with peers and colleagues within and out with social work services
- Undertaking 'horizon-scanning' exercises to ascertain what the delivery of services across all social work disciplines and from commissioned services looks like
- Setting '100 day' targets which identified their own learning needs as well as 'quick wins' and longer term goals and building in a review of achievements from that period
- Enrolling on the Post Graduate Diploma course
- Planning their own 'mini self-evaluations'
- Establishing mentors from within their own workplace, the Chief Social Work Officer group, the post graduate course, from colleagues in other disciplines or from former Chief Social Work Officers
- Establishing shadowing opportunities with the previous incumbent, where available
- Learning from their role models – in some cases, their predecessor
- Recording their own 'job descriptor' of the role
- Seeking support on specific issues from relevant bodies, including the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS), The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), (including the Step into Leadership resource), Social Work Scotland colleagues, The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
- Attending Social Work Scotland facilitated meetings, committees and events

2. Finding their feet

For most Chief Social Work Officers, 'hitting the ground running' was their primary feeling and most have learned the role as they have experienced it. This has meant standing up for their core social work values, even in situations of challenge.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer described a situation in which a tender process was initiated and one organisation which failed to win the tender submitted an appeal out with the timescale. A relative of one of the individuals using the service prepared a petition to appeal the loss of the tender which the Council's Petitions Committee agreed to hear, despite being out with process.

The resulting Petitions Committee was very tense with the Chief Social Work Officer being outwardly challenged in a hostile manner, without any support from the Committee Chair.

The Chief Officer made a formal complaint to the Chief Executive which resulted in a Code of Conduct being approved for all participating in the Petitions Committee.

3. Being self aware

Given the 'duality' of role expressed by the majority of Chief Social Work Officers, it is vitally important to develop the skills and attributes required to remain aware of self in the role.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer who chairs the local area child protection committee as both Head of Service and Chief Social Work Officer noted that this can be conflictual at times: As chair, the Officer must hold social work services – and themselves in the Head of Service role - to account. The Officer ensures that any areas where conflict occurs are explicitly recorded, acknowledging where mistakes have been made or where practice is good.

4. Responding when things go wrong

All Chief Social Work Officers noted the personal impact that ensues from undertaking the role and this is felt most keenly in situations in which things go wrong. It is important on these occasions to recognise the emotive aspects of the situation but, in a senior management role, to apply logical and objective processes, particularly in learning from the situation.

Example

One Chief Social Work Officer spoke of applying the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE Learning Together) model which applies practitioners' views of the world when decisions were made, recognising the collective management responsibility which is required.

5. Self-evaluation

Chief Social Work Officers, in the main, recognised a lack of robust or regular supervision or appraisal processes. Where they did exist in a routine manner, supervision was workload focussed, centred on the raising of issues and was, in most instances, inconsistent. Where an appraisal process was experienced, appraisal tended to be about the substantive post and not the role of Chief Social Work Officer.

Example

Several Chief Social Work Officers spoke about the post graduate Diploma delivered jointly by Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Dundee as one means of supporting their evaluation of their own learning style and learning needs. Most, however, were keen that a clear process of appraisal should be developed and that there be opportunities to evaluate their competencies and performance against the Standard for Chief Social Work Officers. Some Chief Social Work Officers have also established links to coaches or mentors to support them in their role.

Working with others

This aspect of the Standard relates to the capabilities required for effective working with others, both within and out with social work organisations. It has 4 aspects:

Developing networks

An effective Chief Social Work Officer provides leadership in the development of networks. They take responsibility for the articulation and promotion of a shared strategic vision; demonstrate the ability to identify opportunities for collaboration and co-operation across organisational boundaries and take responsibility for ensuring that structures are in place to promote joint working.

Working in partnership

A Chief Social Work Officer works well with colleagues in partner organisations to build collaborative leadership capacity and enable innovation and appropriate risk taking across organisational boundaries. They demonstrate a clear sense of their own role within the partnership arrangement; take responsibility for retaining a focus on outcomes for people who use services and their carers; promote self-determination and autonomy for people who use services and their carers and take responsibility for the management of difference within partnerships.

Building and maintaining trusting relationships

A Chief Social Work Officer builds and maintains trusting relationships across organisational boundaries based on clear communication. They demonstrate the ability to listen to, and take account of, differing perspectives; communicate clearly and effectively across boundaries; gain and maintain the trust of colleagues in their own and other agencies and demonstrate the ability to build commitment to the shared vision.

Building capacity

A Chief Social Work Officer supports the building of capacity across partnerships. They take responsibility for the provision of encouragement and opportunity for people who use services, carers and communities to engage in partnerships; actively promote participation by modelling behaviours which inspire confidence in others and demonstrate the ability to create a culture of collaboration and cooperation.

Examples given by Chief Social Work Officers in relation to this aspect of the Standard are aligned to the following categories:

1. Articulating the Chief Social Work Officer role
2. Being part of wider discussions
3. Changing the views of others
4. Supporting integration

1. Articulating the Chief Social Work Officer role

The role is diverse, complex, can be open to interpretation and is different to professional adviser roles in other sectors. As such, it requires clarity of explanation and transparency:

Example

On taking up post, one Chief Social Work Officer initiated a meeting with the other 2 Heads of Service in the local integrated arrangements in order to speak about the role and its statutory function. It was clear this was not wholly understood by, or familiar to, colleagues, so the Officer related it to duties in health services, for example, the Associate Director of Nursing role, in terms of the duties within that role as they pertain to professional leadership.

The Chief Social Work Officer spoke about the role in compatible terms: it had leadership oversight of the service but not management oversight. The Chief Social Work Officer gave examples of how the role could contribute to services for which peers were responsible, using their perspectives to further explain this. This helped establish good relationships from the outset.

2. Being part of wider discussions

While the demands on the time of Chief Social Work Officers are high, those interviewed recognised that attending as many meetings – both single and multi-agency – as possible, and creating as many links as possible is key to maintaining contacts and visibility and creating connections which will ultimately support Chief Social Work Officers to deliver services. Time spent doing this, particularly early on, was felt to be a good investment.

Example

Being open to learning from other sectors is important in doing the best job you can, as several Chief Social Work Officers described. One spoke about learning from colleagues in business sectors, particularly as the ‘business’ related elements of the role are increasing: the need to manage performance, meet targets, produce project planning, manage change processes and be ‘business-astute’. This Chief Social Work Officer felt that colleagues in the business sector had a wealth of skills which were transferable and from which Chief Social Work Officers could learn, to the benefit of those using services:

The Chief Social Work Officer learned about businesses in the local area which had philanthropic tendencies and approached one to propose working in partnership through a local social enterprise model.

Through the local Violence Against Women partnership, it was observed that a high volume of women were coming to the attention of criminal justice services in relation to their

addiction. The Chief Social Work Officer developed a proposal to help support these women to meet their potential (written in people, not service, terms) and worked with third sector colleagues to involve an independent charitable trust whose vision is about improving the quality of life and experience in communities in Scotland. This Trust wanted

to scope the community to support the development of a local centre in which women could come together, but ensure this was sustainable through its funding. Now this has been developed as a community empowerment model and meetings and events are held which allow women across the community, including the initial group, to come together. Events focus on leisure activities and interests, but support discussions about community empowerment and generate ideas which can be developed.

The Chief Social Work Officer attends some events as a community member and hears first-hand what the group thinks or suggests. For the women involved, the group has brought people together and created informal support networks, is based on human interaction, and connects women to their community. The Trust, as well, has benefitted by moving towards a community empowerment model.

3. Changing the views of others

Chief Social Work Officers recognise that working together with others across all sectors is beneficial, but that this often requires energy and effort to help support others to understand the social work environment. This can often be undertaken through the role of both the substantive post and as Chief Social Work Officer, given the inter-connectedness of the two.

Example

In the role of Head of Service, one Chief Social Work Officer described a piece of work to support a change in language and understanding:

In meetings involving elected members in one local authority area, the financial spend on addictions services was being continually reduced. This was also impacted on by a lack of understanding of the vulnerability of those using addictions services, and a negative portrayal of stereotypes and criminal behaviour. The Chief Social Work Officer set about working to change attitudes and seek re-investment in services for addictions. This was described as a 'drip feed': writing reports on related topics including homelessness, crisis services, associated health impacts etc and disseminating these to a variety of multi-agency groups on which the Chief Social Work Officer was a member, in order to initiate conversations.

The Chief Social Work Officer sought out elected members on these groups who had a proven history of interest in this client group or related areas and aligned themselves with them, taking elected members to events involving those using services and reported gradually noticing a change in the way addictions services were spoken about or referred to.

Now several elected members in this area have 'adopted' these services and fully support proposals, including increases in funding when required.

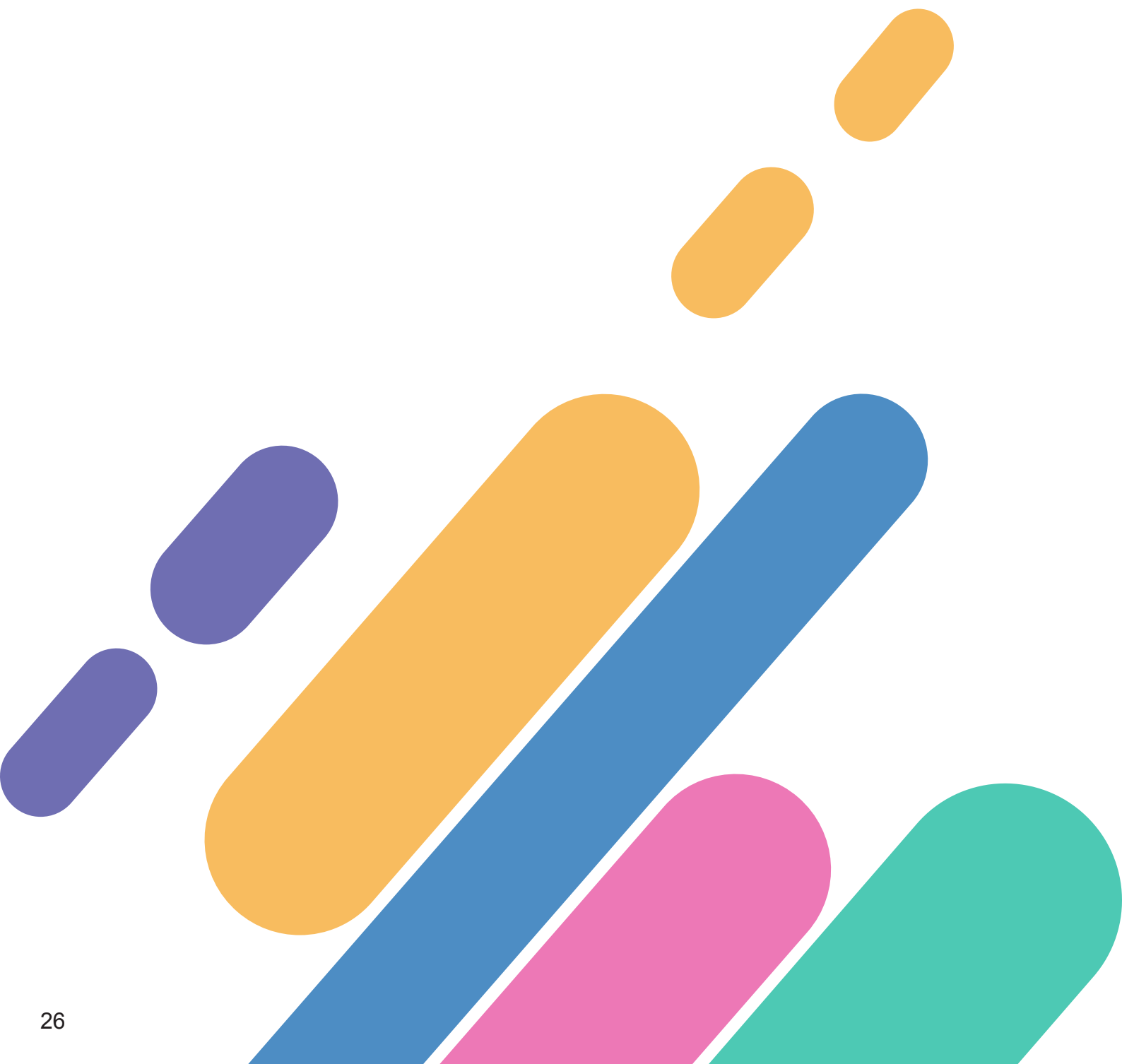
4. Supporting integration

Chief Social Work Officers noted a variety of experience when it came to working in an integrated environment. For some, integration has always been present, particularly those leading children's services which were integrated with education services; for others, it is new and their experience is mixed. Some Chief Social Work Officers spoke positively about this while others described facing regular challenge and spoke negatively about their experience.

Regardless of experience, all expressed a positive approach to supporting integration, recognising that everyone is learning together.

Example

In one area, The Good Governance Institute was commissioned to undertake a piece of work to review adult protection services. This involved the Institute's facilitation of workshops about attitudes to risk, thresholds for care and ways in which the Integration Joint Board can be enabled to take a cohesive and shared approach to protection.



In Summary

The Chief Social Work Officer role is not delivered in isolation: how the statutory duties are undertaken is shaped by the internal and external factors which influence their role and function – some examples of which have been addressed in these materials.

Those interviewed believed that, although the role of the Chief Social Work Officer is not without challenge, it is a privilege to be in a position to shape social work services and celebrate the opportunities to affect change for those using the service.

The Chief Social Work Officers interviewed have identified ways in which they can most effectively deliver their role and affect this change:

- by developing solid, robust, constructively challenging and supportive professional relationships, both within and out with the service
- by consolidating core social work values as integral to all elements of integrated and single-agency working
- by practicing self-care and caring for colleagues
- by being strong leaders and yet remaining open to making mistakes and learning from these
- by being visible to all colleagues, role modelling desired language and behaviour and undertaking effective methods of communication to support staff to feel connected, both to their Chief Social Work Officer and to colleagues
- by seizing opportunities to help shape, grow and develop the social work service from all sectors
- by ensuring the best interests of those using the service remain at the heart of all decision-making

Appendix 1: Further Examples from Practice

Modelling values

Example 1

A Chief Social Work Officer concerned by observations of, and hearing discussions about, whether or not social work, as an identity, would exist in future or not, led an internal discussion with senior managers to support the re-framing of this debate and try to lessen professionals feeling anxious by the integration of services. The Chief Social Work Officer spoke of integration as a 're-birth' and led the debate about how the social work profession can help to re-focus a medical model of care towards an outcomes-based approach which talks about 'people' instead of using output and performance terms.

Example 2

In one local authority, the Chief Social Work Officer worked together with colleagues in the Integration Joint Board to promote best practice for older people in their transition between hospital and intermediate care or home. This led to an agreed decision to remove all social work teams from hospitals and ensure that no-one receives a social work assessment while in hospital, but, instead, a strengths-based assessment is undertaken when the individual returns home, or accesses intermediate care, and focusses on support to maintain independence in the community. This has precipitated a re-framing of language around strengths and re-ablement which has carried over into practice and discussion at the Integration Joint Board.

Example 3

Aware that complaints in relation to social work services were on the increase, and of the impact which this had on staff, one Chief Social Work Officer spent six months as an observer on the local complaints committee, observing the locus of the complaints, how staff presented evidence and reviewing the outcomes of complaints to establish lessons which could be learned and shared. This was then taken to the social work managers' forum to understand the principles, key learning and any changes in practice or process required.

Setting direction

Example 4

Chief Social Work Officers use their annual report as a conduit for discussions about the factors impacting on current social work practice and as a means to stimulate collaborative debate about what has worked and what needs further attention. The report is also used as an exemplar of the tasks which make up the role of the Chief Social Work Officer – for staff and in supporting those who may be aspiring to be Chief Social Work Officers. The report is used as a communication tool in many fora: with elected members to generate an understanding of the social work service and the variety of work inherent in meeting Council outcomes and undertaking statutory tasks; as a means of keeping abreast of what colleagues across the country are facing and addressing; and as a self-evaluation and planning tool in setting a new direction.

Example 5

One Chief Social Work Officer writes to all staff every Christmas, Easter and Summer with updates about the social work service. This correspondence sets the direction of travel, gives progress updates on strategic programmes, talks about culture as 'the way we do business' and stresses the importance of self-care and caring for each other; as well as supporting a culture of 'positive regard' for those using services where practitioners at all levels should demonstrate a genuine interest in people. This Chief Social Work Officer described a high degree of time and energy involved in attending meetings, however, recognised that this was a necessary and invaluable role to maintain visibility and model the above approach.

Example 6

One Chief Social Work Officer wanted to undertake an exercise in 'horizon-scanning' in order to gain a better understanding of how to move the service forward. The Officer sought the support of the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) and, although this approach did not meet all the aims set out, the information gained was invaluable in helping the Chief Social Work Officer to gather knowledge about the social work service which supported a better direction of travel.

Example 7

One Chief Social Work Officer used a parable to describe leadership in establishing culture: during World War II, 2 young soldiers go over the top of the trenches. One is shot and falls, the other goes to him, against his senior officer's advice, saying "he's my brother, it's my

duty". Time passes and the young soldier does not return. Just when the officer is thinking he should never have allowed him to go, he returns, carrying the body of his friend in his arms. The officer asks the young soldier why he went, as he must have known his friend might be dead, the young soldier replies "because he was alive when I reached him". The Chief Social Work Officer used this story to demonstrate leadership through the elements of trust, permission, care and compassion – everything that makes us human.

Example 8

One Chief Social Work Officer spoke about participating in a review of the induction materials for new staff on a six monthly basis to ensure any necessary changes or updates were made which would set the right tone for the desired culture. This same person spoke of taking a leading role in celebrating small and large achievements: whether it be leading awards ceremonies to review achievements in social work in the local area or handwriting cards for staff who have 'big birthdays' or are leaving the service. Doing this was felt to engender a culture in which people mattered.

Example 9

One Chief Social Work Officer spent time reviewing relevant documents to support better partnership working, including an engagement strategy which, when revised, outlined the purpose, format, membership and expectations around all meetings, supervision and other relevant fora.

Example 10

One Chief Social Work Officer used the first year in role to get a sense of 'where the workforce was at' in relation to the integration of services and holding discussions with staff which involved

re-framing and de-personalising an approach which held that 'nurses were managing social workers'. The Chief Social Work Officer developed and led a series of learning and development engagement events, focussing on the context of integration but taking opportunities to discuss the Chief Social Work Officer role and using the language which was desired in an integrated culture. There were concerns expressed about the terminology of clinical managers and worries about health superceding social work practice.

Through discussions, the Chief Social Work Officer was able to separate issues of management and issues for leadership, being clear that the debate raised the topics of professional identity, supervision of/for staff, workload, resilience, processes and procedures. As the importance of supervision is commonly understood across both health and social care, the Chief Social Work Officer took this as the starting point in a programme of work remitted to senior managers, with the proviso that the programme should be about relationships, not processes.

Leading a focus group of senior managers, the Chief Social Work Officer initiated discussion about how to promote and deliver effective supervision in integrated practice. These conversations were individually reflective and honest, and led to a collective agreement to re-visit and review the supervision policy in the context of integration. The Chief Social Work Officer, from this, commissioned a working group to review the policy, and to consider what it means to promote empowering management in supervision practice. Throughout this exercise, the Chief Social Work Officer set the tone by acting from a position of being a professional leader, not a manager.

Example 11

Integrated environments have brought anxiety and uncertainty for some staff who do not understand, but fear, the impact on their professional identity and some Chief Social Work Officers have been drawn into conversations about perceived loss of identity, a dilution of expertise and an 'assimilation' of social work into health models. One Chief Social Work Officer acknowledged that challenging this is an ongoing process which starts from a conversation involving senior managers who, in turn, involve their own staff. Issues can then be opened up for discussion, ensuring that there is clarity around what it means to operate in an integrated environment (through direction-setting, leadership, role modelling etc).

Example 12

One Chief Social Work Officer spoke about feedback which had been given to one service by a young person supported by a team which offers 24/7 support to those leaving care, who had simply said that it would be good if they could have the same social worker for as long as possible.

This team was already focussed on building relationships with care leavers but had previously complained about a lack of engagement from the young people it supported. The Chief Social Work Officer, via senior managers, supported the team who came up with an idea about how to change this and develop their approach. The team approached a local cookery school in the area to develop sessions in which staff and young people leaving care learned to cook together. As well as supporting young people to learn vital skills for becoming independent, this demonstrated to the young people that even adults should be prepared to accept their own vulnerability. The culture has now moved from a 'lack of engagement' to a 'how to engage' culture.

Example 13

Setting a direction also involves being clear about available resources and budgets. One Chief Social Work Officer spoke about the need to review finance as part of any transformation agenda and recognised that being aware of accountability for the public

purpose is a legitimate role for any social work manager, and for a Chief Social Work Officer, when reviewing risk in relation to finance. How can you carry risk when there is a clear need to cut budgets? The Chief Social Work Officer has used 'crises' to start the debate, for instance, a discussion about the need to reduce resources in older people's services because of a reduction in budgets led to a wider discussion about changing approaches to older people's services. This led to a transformation agenda about changing care for older people from a paternalistic, risk-averse approach to a strengths-based and risk-enabling position. The Chief Social Work Officer involved all relevant sector colleagues and ensured an equal balance of health and social work colleagues in shaping a programme which was a whole pathway through the community.

Example 14

One Chief Social Work Officer cited the work of Professor John Bolton regarding the use of influencing leadership to change culture, with particular reference to his work in adult social care (see John Bolton - discussion paper).

Achieving outcomes

Example 15

One Chief Social Work Officer, whose local authority was seeking to transform services for adults and older people, was keen to gain as much information and consultation with staff as possible. As well as implementing standard consultative processes, there was an 'ideas board' in the Chief Social Work Officer's office on which staff were encouraged to make any suggestion for change and improvement throughout this process. All staff were welcome to participate in 'blue sky thinking' and the Chief Social Work Officer collated this information routinely and took it to regular senior management meetings.

Example 16

Some local authority areas are transforming services to better meet need: The Realigning Children's Services programme is being implemented in several local authorities and is a collaborative approach between Scottish Government, Community Planning Partnerships, communities and families, and a means to refocus services towards preventative care and away from crisis intervention, where possible. The role of the Chief Social Work Officer is paramount in helping to identify where changes in practice are required, identifying the ways in which these can be supported and ensuring staff are equipped to make the necessary changes.

Another programme being explored in some local authority areas is the Reclaiming Social Work programme. This programme was first developed in the London Borough of Hackney as an initiative to achieve high quality social care for vulnerable children and families, and consists of extensive changes in structure and practice aimed at reducing risk, and centring on the creation of small, multi-skilled teams.

Example 17

In working towards achieving outcomes, Chief Social Work Officers seek reassurance of services meeting people's individual needs. One Chief Social Work Officer had to re-phrase a question asked by a colleague: 'how many people were on a waiting list' became 'what are the needs of people waiting for the service and how can we work together to meet these effectively?'. A recent proposal to 'meet targets' for waiting times, sought to discharge individuals from hospital into residential care homes prior to receipt of a community care assessment. The Chief Social Work Officer initiated a conversation by clarifying statutory social work duties, talking of the needs of those requiring a service and used skills in negotiation to influence a change in direction towards outcomes.

Example 18

One Chief Social Work Officer was made aware, through reviewing a complex complaint, of inconsistent practice and a poor customer service experience for one individual, leading to the decision being made to re-allocate the case to a different team. Poor practice decisions had been made in the original team, however, the Chief Social Work Officer judged that seeking to take staff through a disciplinary process would not be helpful in this instance and that a balance had to be struck between 'learning lessons' and understanding the process and actions which had led to this point. In advance of the decision being made public, the Chief Social Work Officer met first with the original team, then the new team, to open up a conversation about why the decision to move the case was made, what could be learned about the situation, what had worked well and what could be improved. This resulted in an action plan for change and ensured that those affected directly had been involved as much as possible from the earliest point.

The Chief Social Work Officer recognised that one of the responsibilities inherent in the role is acting as the voice of those using services but, to do this successfully, requires skills in persuasion, diplomacy, understanding and influence.

Self leadership

Example 19

Several Chief Social Work Officers spoke about the impact of gender experience on the role – both for the women and men in the group, and for wider groups which Chief Social Workers lead. Gender was raised in different forms: the experience of sexism and gender-based discrimination was raised by some Chief Social Work Officers; as well as the impact on family life, which was raised by female Chief Social Work Officers commenting on primary childcare or caring responsibilities. One Chief Social Work Officer also described experiencing open hostility and patronising mannerisms and speech.

The current incumbent group is predominantly female with a large majority of the whole group being in role less than three years. Both women and men from the group expressed feelings of 'inadequacy' or 'under-confidence' in the role and these feelings were not necessarily gender-based.

The impact of gender, while largely unspoken in the wider Chief Social Work Officer group, does provide an undercurrent in relation to self leadership. All Officers spoke about engendering good communication and 'people' skills in order to help address this through:

- a great deal of self reflection
- finding 'like-minded' colleagues
- seeking support with leadership
- making it ok to say you don't know
- seeking robust supervision
- establishing a trusted mentor or coach – informally from peers or formally through programmes such as Taylor Clarke coaching and mentoring
- working on winning 'hearts and minds'.

Despite these generic skills, the context in which they were expressed was gender-based and linked to discussions around self-perception, confidence and emotional intelligence.

Example 20

While not specifically related to gender, certain situations were felt by some Chief Social Work Officers to have discriminatory undertones and required to be challenged. One spoke about being deliberately refused attendance at senior management budgetary meetings which related to services for which they were directly responsible. The reason given was that this could be undertaken by the director. The officer strongly remonstrated because the director's background was not in social work, nor was the background of any of the other directors attending. Through continual communications to protest a lack of parity, the Officer was eventually asked to attend for a brief section of the meeting and described a very negative experience of this.

Example 21

Most Chief Social Work Officers described their areas of expertise in relation to children's services, adults' services or criminal justice services – those with cross sector experience or knowledge of all areas were in the minority at the point of appointment. This led to the Chief Social Work Officers recognising where there were gaps in their knowledge base which, conversely, were not expected by senior managers at the point of appointment. It was felt by Chief Social Work Officers that their line managers assumed their all-round knowledge of social work as a whole sector. The individuals, however, aware of their own learning needs, approached this in several ways:

One Chief Social Work Officer has a reference group which can be called together on an ad hoc basis as and when it is needed and from which the individual can seek expert or technical knowledge or advice from senior or middle managers from different areas of the sector in order to support decision-making processes. The Chief Social Work Officer has also established a steering group for the local practitioners' forum to maintain contact with frontline practice and approaches.

Another Chief Social Work Officer spoke about learning to 'extract information' from others with respect and expertise, letting people who they manage see that it is ok to not know everything but that it is important to find out from people who hold that information.

Another Chief Social Work Officer has sought the input of Aston University management and leadership training to deliver leadership training in the area for all senior managers across disciplines.

Example 22

Recognising that the quality assurance aspect of the role requires Chief Social Work Officers to hold their peers to account, some of those interviewed spoke of tensions or difficulties inherent in doing so. They recognised, however, that while the statutory element of this exists, it cannot be used bluntly, and that relationship-building was the primary focus of undertaking this task. Chief Social Work Officers spoke of avoiding an 'absolutist' position and using interpersonal skills to gain a consensual approach, understanding that they had a role in influencing excellent practice in services for which they are not directly managing.

Example 23

One joint governance group has a process in place for jointly reviewing adverse events and near misses – learning from health colleagues' experience of these processes – and has now drafted a process to involve all key professionals across relevant sectors. This has informed a joint way forward and tried to decrease silo working. It is challenging, requires strong leadership without prejudice and all professionals involved must 'be brave'.

Working with others

Example 24

One Chief Social Work Officer with experience of working in the business sector has been able to apply learning from that sector's research and development models to social work commissioning practice. Working with local businesses can generate funding not available in community planning partnerships and can reduce the need to commission formal services.

Example 25

One Chief Social Work Officer spoke about creating greater connectivity, in particular with Chief Executives, who may not always understand the Chief Social Work Officer's role or that of social work as a service, to the detail required to support Chief Social Work Officers. This individual made a point of taking reports on all social work disciplines to Integration Joint Boards and other multi-disciplinary fora in order to, not only keep the service visible, but to open discussions on topics and show links across sectors.



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