

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*



The Meaningful Involvement Study

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■ **Research project**

- Collaboration between me and a researcher with ‘lived experience’ of mental distress, Karen Robinson
- Study protocol jointly designed
- Karen conducted interviews and led data analysis in collaboration with me

■ **MSc Mental Health Social Work with Children & Adults**

- Post-Qualifying (PQ) Advanced Award in Social Work
- GSCC (2005) requirement to involve users and carers in all aspects of the programme

■ **Challenges**

- King’s College London had no other social work programmes
- No User Development Worker or group of service users and carers involved in social work education within the College to draw upon
- No model of user and carer involvement in advanced PQ programmes
- Is our involvement strategy tokenistic or meaningful?



A note on terminology

- Service users and carers are not a homogenous group and many do not identify with these terms
- No terms can adequately describe the complexity of human experiences
- ‘Service user’ describes “a person who uses social work or social care services”
- ‘Carer’ is “someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a friend, neighbour or relative who could not manage otherwise because of frailty, illness or disability” (Fitzhenry 2008)

Level 1a	Learner perceptions	Students views on their learning experience and satisfaction with the training
Level 1b	Service user or carer perceptions	Service user or carer views on their involvement experience
Level 1c	Staff perceptions	Staff views on involving service users or carers
Level 2a	Modification in attitudes and perceptions	A measured change in attitudes or perceptions towards service users or carers, their problems, needs, circumstances or care
Level 2b	Acquisition of knowledge and skills	A measured change in understanding the concepts, procedures and principles of working with service users or carers, and the acquisition of thinking/problem solving, assessment and intervention skills
Level 3a	Changes in behaviour	Observation of whether the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes are evident in the practice of the social worker
Level 3b	Changes in organisational practice	Observation of wider changes in the organisation / delivery of care, attributable to service user or carer involvement in an educational programme
Level 4	Benefits to users and carers	Assessment as to whether there is a tangible difference to the well-being and quality of life of service users or carers who receive social work services

(Adapted from Carpenter (2005) and Morgan and Jones (2009); original framework devised by Kirkpatrick (1967))



Level 1a	Learner perceptions	***** *****
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Level 2a	Modification in attitudes and perceptions	***
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Level 3a	Changes in behaviour	
Level 3b	Changes in organisational practice	
Level 4	Benefits to users and carers	

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- User and carer involvement in social work education:
 - has a positive impact on those involved (users, carers, students and lecturers)
 - can change students' attitudes and perceptions
 - can help students to acquire new knowledge or skills
- But, there is no evidence that it changes practitioner behaviour, organisational practice or has wider benefits to service users and carers (due to a lack of robust studies)
- Most studies have been conducted at qualifying level
- PQ social work education is under-evaluated; evaluations of advanced level programmes are rare
- No studies have specifically examined user and carer involvement in PQ advanced level programmes



■ **Process of involvement:**

- building relationships based on trust and addressing power imbalances
- focuses primarily on meaningfulness to service users and carers
- majority of literature implicitly embraces this definition

■ **Outcomes of involvement:**

- evidence of change or improvement in services
- focuses on social work practice and its impact on outcomes for service users and carers
- paucity of evidence of outcomes of involvement

■ **No definition of meaningful involvement in advanced level PQ social work education**



- To articulate what is the meaningful involvement of service users and carers in advanced level PQ social work education
- To understand meaningful involvement from the perspectives of all stakeholders involved:
 - service users
 - carers
 - students (experienced social workers)
 - social work employers and managers
 - PQ programme leaders and lecturers



- **Design**
 - Qualitative methodology incorporating semi-structured interviews, focus group and self-complete questionnaire
- **Sampling**
 - Purposive sampling strategy to obtain multiple diverse perspectives
 - Sample size influenced by theoretical saturation
- **Procedures**
 - Recruited social work academics from Advanced Social Work Practice Network and service users, carers, students and employers from advanced level PQ programmes
 - Data collection focused on multiple domains of involvement
- **Analysis**
 - Interviews transcribed verbatim
 - Data analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) – both inductive and deductive

	n (%)
Service users and carers	4 (13.8)
Social workers undertaking advanced level PQ programmes	16 (55.2)
PQ programme leaders and lecturers	7 (24.1)
Employers and managers	2 (6.9)
Female	18 (62.1)
Male	11 (37.9)
White British	18 (62.1)
Other white	2 (6.9)
Black	8 (27.6)
Asian	1 (3.4)
Under 40 years old	12 (41.4)
Over 40 years old	17 (58.6)
Total	29 (100)



- Facilitate personal development of service users and carers involved / challenge power imbalance between service users, carers and professionals
 - Expressed predominantly by social work academics
 - Enrich curriculum, facilitates reflective practice and improve outcomes
 - Expressed by all stakeholder groups
- (Similar to literature on qualifying programmes)

- **Different training needs:**

“So, if we’re working from the assumption that practitioners have years of experience when they come on to this, they will be very familiar with the needs of the people that they are working with. Any involvement in the educational experience at that level, has ... got to give them something which they have not already gained through their practice.” (*Programme leader / lecturer*)

- **Different ideas about *how* service users and carers could add value to programmes, e.g.**

- Voluntary sector user-led agencies can enrich highly specific curricula
- Leaders of user-led agencies can contribute to leadership and management programmes
- Service users and carers with training as an advocate or social work can make informed contributions

- **Majority opinion**



Not different from other levels of social work education

- User and carer involvement on qualifying programmes is the same as on advanced level PQ programmes

- Same principles:

“The same principles apply ... It’s the principles that are key here, and the same principles apply. And if you have an advanced level course, um, for example, there’s no reason why users and carers can’t control a module of that course...” (*Programme leader / lecturer*)



- Participants referred to a number of different models or philosophies of user and carer involvement in advanced level PQSW education
- All participants referred to at least one model – HEIs are likely to draw upon more than one at any one time
- Some participants were explicit about models, others felt that involvement strategies developed pragmatically
- To summarise our findings, we have categorised the models into four ‘ideal types’



Model 1: Consultation

- Service user and carer expertise is drawn upon to make specific contributions to programmes
- Power resides with PQ programme leaders, but can be shared if users or carers are employed on an equal basis
- A panel of service users and carers could be involved for their specific contributions
- Model was mentioned with particular reference to curriculum development



Model 2: Partnership

- Service user and carer contributions are equal to that of other contributors
- Service users and carers have equal pay, status and authority to that of social work academics
- Power and decision-making is shared
- Partnership working is most likely to develop through long-standing relationships with individuals or groups
- Service users and carers might be consultants or lecturers



- Primary purpose of involvement is empowerment of service users and carers
- All service users and carers have equal access to involvement in social work education
- Service users and carers involved need to be 'representative'
- Democratic way of working is intrinsic to model
- Model seeks to empower a large number of diverse people to participate
- Focus is on needs, personal development and political emancipation of people seen to be disempowered



Model 4: User control

- Power resides with service users and carers (the top of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of involvement)
- Widespread acknowledgement that this is unlikely to be achieved in reality, but should be an aspiration
- Articulated by social work academics rather than service users or carers



- We found three predominant involvement methodologies were being used on advanced level PQ programmes:
 1. Working with service-user voluntary organisations
 2. Working with individual service users and carers
 3. Establishing a group of service users and carers
- Different methods can be found within the same programme



- Small study
- Small sample of service users, carers and employers participated
- Response bias?
- Sampling bias?
- Influence of service user researcher / social work academic on data collection and analysis?

“added value”



“empowerment”

Aim is to improve educational and practice outcomes for social workers

Involvement is different than other SW education

Careful selection of users and carers for particular purposes

Long-term, consistent involvement of a small group of users and carers

Expertise is actively sought to add value to advanced level PQ programmes

More likely to follow a ‘consultation’ or ‘partnership’ model

Aim is to challenge power imbalance between users & carers and SWs

Involvement is same as in other SW education

Equal access to involvement by all service users and carers

Larger numbers of service users and carers involved

People with lived experience but few skills are encouraged to become involved

More likely to follow a ‘political’ or ‘user control’ model



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The Meaningful Involvement of Service Users and Carers in Advanced-Level Post-Qualifying Social Work Education: A Qualitative Study

Martin Webber* and Karen Robinson

Models and Effectiveness of Service User and Carer Involvement in Social Work Education: A Literature Review

Karen Robinson and Martin Webber*

Please do not hesitate to contact me for full copies of the papers:

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