Engaging with Involuntary service users in social work

Engaging with Scottish Local Authorities Scheme

The Project
This one year project is designed to improve the capacity of local authorities to engage involuntary service users in social work. Involuntary service users are those mandated to use social work services by Court or other compulsory order.

Aims
- To highlight relevant research on user involvement, examples of innovative practice and lessons from unsuccessful approaches.
- Increase the skills and capacity of participating local authority staff to engage in small scale research and inquiry.
- Develop networks for effective knowledge exchange within and between partner local authorities and the University and to the wider social work community around the theme of working with involuntary service users.

What we will do

**Scoping study**
This study will identify relevant existing research and examples of practice in this area.

**Series of events**
- **‘Think tank’ seminar**
  A ‘think tank’ seminar will provide an opportunity for open dialogue on the practice dilemmas and academic thinking on involuntary service users.
- **Shared events**
  A set of three seminars for local authorities will establish wider, knowledge-exchange networks and encourage debate. These will include feedback and evaluation tools, building relationships with hard-to-reach clients and different communication methods.
- **Internal events**
  Two events will be held within each local authority. The internal events will allow each local authority to develop participating theme/population group which they want to prioritise.

**Seminars**
Three seminars are planned, for local authority staff. The South East Scotland Learning Network will contribute to planning the seminars and disseminating their outcomes.

**Placements**
Up to three individuals from each participating local authority will work with an academic supervisor to undertake a small-scale piece of research based on the identified needs of their local authority.

**Good Practice Guides**
Good Practice Guides will be developed. They will include practical tools which can be either lifted ‘off the shelf’, or adapted to a given situation or user group. The guides will be sent to all local authorities in Scotland.

**Evaluation**
The overall impact evaluation will seek to map ways in which the knowledge exchange events have achieved the outputs and benefits outlined in the project aims.

Research team
Dr Heather Wilkinson - Senior Research Fellow & Co-Director of the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships
Mark Smith - Lecturer in Social Work, The University of Edinburgh

Others involved
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Participating Scottish local authorities
City of Edinburgh Council
East Lothian Council • Midlothian Council
West Lothian Council • Fife Council
Scottish Borders Council
CRFR (Centre for Research on Families and Relationships)

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