



Cooperation and Working Together

EU INTERREG IVA Social Work Project

Bulletin

Issue 2 July 2010

Both Departments of Health and Co-operation and Working Together have been successful in securing funding from the European Union INTERREG IVA programme, to progress a two year cross border project. This project will support and develop the skills of Social Work Team Leaders within the area of Child and Family services to increase leadership capacity in the CAWT partner organisations. The project is still in the early stages and the focus is on consultation in order to inform the direction of the project.

Stakeholder Event

As part of the consultation process a successful stakeholder event was held in recent months. Forty Social Work Team Leaders and Service Managers working within Family and Child Care Services from both jurisdictions participated in this lively and informative discussion.

Participants provided excellent feedback to enable us inform the project direction.

Key Challenges

The challenges facing the professional role of social work are well recognised and need to be considered in the development of training. There was much discussion surrounding these key challenges which can be broadly categorised as follows:

Staff Support

The need to effectively support staff who are dealing with complex and emotive issues is a key challenge. High staff turnover, temporary contracts and provision of support for less experienced staff were also highlighted as key issues for Team Leaders.

Role Clarity

Participants identified the need for greater clarity regarding the role of Social Work Team Leaders, this would contribute to more effective performance within the role.

Professional Development

It was recognised that work pressures can impact on the time required for training and professional development activities.



Southern Health and Social Care Trust Staff who attended the stakeholder event: (left to right) Hazel Quinn, Niaiv McCaughley, Jacqui Swann and Ian Montgomery. Missing from photograph David Douglas and Harry Douglas.

Accountability/Greater Scrutiny

Social Work Team Leaders have to operate within the context of greater regulatory and media scrutiny. Also there is a need to ensure greater public understanding of the social work profession and the positive impact it has on society.

Suggested Support

The following areas were suggested by attendees to address the challenges and provide support.

Training and Development

The introduction of a compulsory leadership/first line manager development programme for Social Work Team Leaders. Such a programme would include core general management skills, supervision skills, reflective practice, stress management, managing change, mediation and coaching for performance skills to support the creation of 'a high challenge, high support environment'.

Evidence Based Practice

There is a need to allocate protected time to facilitate greater professional development, research and to source evidence based materials to reference decisions to support the legal aspect of social work.

Networking

To provide opportunities for Social Work Team Leaders to network and learn from each other, creating opportunities for personal and professional development to enhance their decision making skills.



Western Health and Social Care Trust Staff who attended the stakeholder event:

Back Row (left): Damien McLaughlin, Claire McDermott, Mairead McGilloway, Ann Foster, Pat McDaid, Karen O'Brien, Deirdre Mahon, Catherine Blackburn
Front Row (left): Pat Norris, Sandra McDevitt, Kevin Duffy, Geraldine Dolan and Kieran McAnaney

Next Steps

The event provided much food for thought. The feedback will enable the development of the leadership capacity programme/training ensuring it meets the needs of the participants.

The key areas to be developed include:

- Develop competency framework for Social Work Team Leaders.
- Develop existing online National Social Work Qualification Board North/South cooperation website.
- Create an on line forum to enable discussion on pertinent issues.
- Develop a series of cross border Action Learning sets.



HSE Staff who attended the stakeholder event:

Back Row (left): Linda Gallagher, Una Ryan, Liz Coogan; Bronagh McKenna, Pat Neville, Julie Mallen, Paul McLaughlin
Front Row (left): Gerry Hone, Phil Maria, Eoin Redmond, Maria MacInnes and Margy Dyas

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