

SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

Consultation on Standards and Practice Competences to achieve the Mental Health Social Work Award

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) was asked by the Scottish Executive, as part of its requirements under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2003, to lead in the development of new arrangements for the Mental Health Social Work Award (MHSWA). The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2003, gives the SSSC the responsibility for registering people who work in social services and for regulating their education and training. Ministerial Directions require that social workers, prior to their appointment as Mental Health Officers (MHOs), undertake a course of training approved by the SSSC.
- 1.2 The need to develop the new Award arose from the introduction of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 which introduced a new range of duties and requirements for MHOs along with the outcome of work undertaken by the SSSC during 2005 to review the mode of delivery of the MHSWA. Whilst there was a general view that the competences on which the Award is based remain fit for purpose and there are no significant concerns about quality assurance, it was acknowledged that greater standardisation and consistency across the programmes was required given the increased legislative requirements. It was agreed at the SSSC's Learning and Development Committee meeting on 16 May 2006 that new arrangements needed to be put in place for the training of social workers as MHOs. A short life working group was established to support officers of the SSSC to complete this work.

2 Purpose of the Mental Health Social Work Award

- 2.1 The primary purpose of the Award is to train local authority-employed qualified and registered social workers for appointment to the role of Mental Health Officer as defined in Section 32 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and as qualified by the direction of the Scottish Ministers (Requirements for Appointment as Mental Health Officers) Direction 2005. The provision of sufficient MHOs to fulfil their prescribed role is a major statutory duty of local authorities. The duties of MHOs are in relation to protection of the health, safety and welfare of people vulnerable because of mental disorder; the safeguarding of their rights and freedoms; the protection of health, safety, welfare, finances and property of adults with incapacity; duties to the Court and to public protection in relation to mentally disordered offenders and, possibly, new roles as detailed in forthcoming guidance in relation to adult support and protection.
- 2.2 A secondary purpose may be to make aspects of the training available to a wider group in social work and related professions, who do not, or are not qualified to become MHOs.

3 Guiding Principles

- 3.1 Social Work has a strong ethical basis which emphasises the importance of working through positive professional relationships with people who use services and with colleagues. This is evident in the Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC's) Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers.
- 3.2 The Millan Principles informed the principles within The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 which are binding upon MHOs and other formal agents of the Act. The ten key principles developed by the Millan Committee¹ are non-discrimination, equality, respect for diversity, reciprocity, informal care, participation, respect for carers, least restrictive alternative, benefit and child welfare.
- 3.3 A core guiding principle of our work in progressing new standards and competences is to achieve an award that facilitates access and progression while maintaining standards. Both the Millan Principles and the SSSC Codes of Practice inform the development work being undertaken in drafting the professional Standards that will underpin the new Award.
- 3.4 Learning in practice is essential to achieving the competence required for appointment to the MHO role.

4.0 Purpose of the consultation

- 4.1 The purpose of this consultation is to seek your views on the draft standards and practice competences to achieve the Mental Health Social Work Award.
- 4.2 A series of four consultation events will also be held in May and June within the regional learning network areas.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 On the closure of the consultation period received responses on the Mental Health Standards will be reviewed and a finalised version submitted to the short life working group in September 2007.
- 5.2 The short life working group will then submit its recommendations on the Standards to the next Council meeting being held on 30 October 2007. The Council will then submit the agreed Standards to Scottish Ministers.

KATE PRYDE

Chair, Short Life Working Group

April 2007

¹ New Directions, Report of the Review of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984
Millan, The Rt Hon, B. (Chair), Scottish Executive, 2001