

Social work teaching partnerships: an evaluation, Isabelle Trowler.

When I started out as Chief Social worker for children and families seven years ago, I knew I wanted to put in place something similar to the concept of teaching partnerships. Namely a national strategic collaboration between Local Authorities and Universities.

So it is with pride & satisfaction that the evaluation of teaching partnerships concludes that their most important benefit has been the development of a culture of collaborative working between Higher Education Institutions, Local Authorities and other partners in the way social work education is designed, planned and delivered.

It is very satisfying that I have been in post to watch as one of my ambitions developed from idea to something that with the input, hard work and dedication of many people has become a real success.

But none of this would have happened without the enormous efforts of universities & local authorities and colleagues in the Department for Education

So a big thankyou to everyone involved.

The three headlines that stand out for me are

- *More rigorous assessment and selection processes* are now in place for entry onto undergraduate and postgraduate social work programmes in most partnerships; ensuring those who qualify as social workers not only have the knowledge and skills, but also the values and ethics which underpin our practice.
- *Impressive increase in the provision of high-quality statutory placements* is reported by TPs across all phases. This has been one of the hardest things for partnerships to have achieved and is crucial that sufficient numbers of qualifying social workers understand what it means to work in statutory practice. That early *applied* experience helps people make the right choices for their working lives.
- We have seen *greater embedding of the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS)*; though I am also sure we need to do much more in embedding the post qualification standards. It is essential that whatever the knowledge and skills statements turn into in future years, that we remember why it is important that there is a post qualification specialist standard that social workers must be able to demonstrate that they can meet.

Every single social work report for the last 20 years has made this a recommendation. Let us not lose sight of that.

The evaluation also shows that TPs have been a *vehicle for change* - bringing partners together, has enabled them to more easily work together to engage in other national initiatives, such as apprenticeships.

It is not just what those institutions *do* that matters - but it's also what they symbolise. If an institution exists, it sends a signal of public value, of respect & recognition.

The fact that teaching partnerships have survived this long is indicative of the current value of social work and how it is perceived and how the investment is necessary. We must keep fighting *for* that.

Evidence of positive impact is so important and it's why this evaluation is so valuable

But we have work to do.

We have a 3-year spending review coming up and we have just a few months to prepare our *best* evidence to position teaching partnerships as something that the government wishes to continue to fund.

I would love the future of teaching partnerships to include every single local authority and every single provider of social work education.

There is work to do with the each of the regions to look at how we can build on utilising economies of scale and build on the clear success that teaching partnerships have had to date

So to end once again a big thank you to everybody involved. Great work.