

Personalisation and people with learning disabilities. Developments so far and their impact on the role of social workers.

The current transformation agenda is bringing major change to services and this is intended to develop much greater choice and control for people who use services through mechanisms of personal budgets and self directed support. It is known that access to personalisation by people with learning disabilities (in the form of direct payments) was initially low. Recently there have been substantial developments in the sector through projects such as InControl. What is less clear is the scope of the evidence about outcomes achieved and about the impact of personalisation on the role of social workers.

A literature review and scoping study has been carried out by the two presenters to explore these two aspects. The paper will report on what has been learned from this and will also explore some of the emerging tensions in the transformation agenda and their implications for social work education. Critiques of personalisation have suggested that it should not be accepted uncritically (Ferguson, 2007) but a congruence between personalisation and relationship based social work has also been observed (Parkinson, 2010).

Politically the social movement of disability has long sought to break down the social and structural barriers which disable people from being fully included in society and social life (Oliver, 1996). Personalisation promotes choice and control but can be interpreted in different ways across the political spectrum, involving threats too. Individual 'purchasing power' may endanger collective services at a time when these are especially vulnerable. And where is the role for social workers in personalisation? Could it liberate or deprofessionalise them?

References:

Ferguson, I. (2007), 'Increasing User Choice or Privatizing Risk? The Antinomies of Personalization,' *British Journal of Social Work*, 37: 387-403.

Oliver, M (1996) 'Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice,' Palgrave: Basingstoke.

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