

## **Better Than The Best of a Bad Job**

The Social Work and Disability module is part of a three-year social work undergraduate degree programme. I co-educate with service users and carers, in accordance with DoH (2002) requirements, and Personalisation agenda guidance, DoH (2008). This paper considers the shared learning from the experience, in November 2010, of a sudden and unexpected reduction in funding for this involvement part way through the planned module. I evaluate the experience of one cohort of students and integrate this with their reflections, those of the service users and carers and my own.

I discuss the personal qualities required of me to challenge the implementation of the cuts, and later my acceptance. I explore practical and philosophical dimensions of decision-making and planning of alternatives: rationing or rationalising? The experience tested my commitment, integrity and honesty; it produced an opportunity to be transparent about difficult decision-making processes. The students learned from the way that this was carried out and their own response to it. The carer and service user were tested and grew from a change in expectation.

This presentation focuses upon the impact of budgetary restraint on student, lecturer, service users and carers as co-educators. This was a bereavement, a loss of plans, opportunities, hopefulness. Unexpectedly, the learning from the experience has generated deep personal reflection and recourse to my own strong moral character. It promoted growth for service users, carers and students, fostering a new and positive collegiality amongst the student group. Returning to ethical principles when decision-making, together with re-visiting the learning from models of loss such as that of Kübler-Ross (1970), contributed to a possible successful strategy to promote resilience for all of us as we face very testing times.

Department of Health (2002) Requirements for Social Work Training. London: Stationery Office

Department of Health (2008) Introduction to Personalisation available at [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Socialcarereform/Personalisation/DH\\_080573](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Socialcarereform/Personalisation/DH_080573) (accessed 9.2.10)

Kübler-Ross, E. (1970) On Death and Dying London: Tavistock