

## Knowledge and skills framework integrating theory and practice

The first report of the Social Work Task Force (SWTF 2009a) cited a literature review, commissioned by the Scottish Executive, on the role of the social worker in the twenty-first century, which concluded:

Social work is a contested concept and subject to competing definitions. Its language is confusing and contributes to the lack of clarity about what it is that social workers do. This means that there is no universally accepted idea of valid knowledge, skills or expertise for social workers.  
(Scottish Executive 2005: 2)

I argue in this presentation that this 'lack of clarity' has contributed in part to the current 'watershed' or crisis in social work and examples from recent publications are cited to support this view (SWTF 2009a; SWTF 2009b; Munro 2010; Munro 2011). Two key issues are highlighted:

- (1) the extent to which new theories have been introduced but with little attempt to order or to categorise these theories in ways that integrate theory and practice.
- (2) the neglect that is evident on the coverage of social work skills and interventions.

The *Knowledge and Skills Framework* presented marks an attempt to address these limitations. It shows the integration of knowledge and skills by illustrating 'a users' map of the knowledge-base of professional practice' in social work (Eraut 1994: 50) - a 'conceptual map' that can be creatively adapted to focus on the knowledge that service users, carers and social workers bring to the encounter. Critical thinking, analysis and critical reflection or reflexivity (Sheppard 1998) are central features of the diagram presented.

### References

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