

## **Understanding uncertainty, dilemma and organisational flux: Developing a reflexive toolkit to enhance new practitioner's resilience.**

The fast changing organisational landscape of social care practice can make being a newly qualified Social Worker a daunting experience. At the University of Portsmouth, final year Social Work students have just completed an 'Imagining New Social Work Futures' unit which has sought to prepare students for such challenges. This paper will provide an overview of the teaching content and delivery of this new unit alongside a critical evaluation of outcomes and lessons learnt.

Social work education needs to equip students with a grounded appreciation of the complexities of the role, alongside effective strategies to engage in ongoing critical reflection of contexts and self. The challenge remains how to realistically prepare students for the increasingly uncertain and turbulent practice environment they are about to enter into whilst enhancing their energy and optimism to make a difference.

Realising the relevance and value of integrating practice into theory and theory into practice was a common theme of this unit with ongoing examples given of how to analyse everyday experience, policy and practice development and broader societal changes. By emphasising the two way connect between the personal and political, students were facilitated to deconstruct taken-for-granted concepts such as 'fairness' and 'need' and gain a sharper appreciation of how such concepts are shifting and contested.

A range of teaching methods were utilised to provide diverse and competing narratives from service users, practitioners and social commentators so as to illustrate how notions of 'truth' and 'knowledge' are never settled. This provided powerful illustrations of how there are competing visions of the future not only between groups but also within.

The need to develop resilience was an ongoing theme of the unit with an emphasis placed on using self reflection and supervision to make sense of and work with competing demands. With this in mind, the idea of developing a reflexive toolkit to enhance future practitioner's capacity to understand, analyse and work with dilemma and paradox in their everyday practice was explored.

Finally, the paper will take a critical overview of the outcomes of this unit, feedback received and lessons learnt for the future.