

## Social Work Essay

Social work is a profession that focuses on people of all ages. The definition given by the International Federation of Social Workers is,

The above definition states that social work values include solving problems, enhancing well-being, human rights, social justice, empowerment, social change and liberation. The definition of the word 'values' differs depending on whether you are talking about personal values or professional values. Personal values are a set of principles that support peoples actions or behaviours. Professional values are guidelines like the Code of Practice set up by the Care Council for Wales that all social care workers must adhere to. As a social worker our personal values must not interfere with our professional values. We must be professional at all times.

The role of a social worker is to shield vulnerable people, develop relationships and where possible help families to stay together while sticking to these guidelines. They also support people to enable them to live a happy life as possible. Social workers work as part of multi-disciplinary teams with other professions such as education, health and probation services. This is to make sure that all aspects of the service users life is taken into consideration when help is being discussed. If this is completed effectively no aspect of the service users life is left without any help if it is needed. Social workers work in various different organisations. Some work for local authorities in children and adult services departments there are also social workers working in hospitals and the voluntary and private sector.

The above value of social justice includes the need for resources to be distributed evenly amongst all members of society, to ensure that basic human needs are met. It is the members of society that are socially excluded that find it difficult to access these resources. Many people that social workers work with are socially excluded and discriminated against for a number of reasons. Social exclusion is defined as,

Social exclusion describes a way of life where opportunities are few, services are difficult to access and people lose hope. It is caused and upheld by a set of linked, and often recurring, problems like low income, lack of work, poor health, low educational attainment, living in a poor physical environment and high levels of crime. As a result of social exclusion it is difficult to reduce poverty and malnutrition due to the people who are socially excluded being more difficult to reach. People with less money are more likely to have poor levels of health and education. This is particularly true when lack of money is paired with lack of basic needs.

Discrimination is also a big part of being socially excluded. Discrimination has been apparent as far back as 1834 with the Poor Law Amendment Act where people were categorised as either deserving or undeserving poor. The deserving poor included widows, the very old and the very ill, the undeserving poor included unmarried mothers. Some members of society still hold these views today. Members of society can be discriminated against for many reasons including age, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Discrimination has negative affects for both the individual and society. It could result in the individual being too scared to leave the house for fear of being called names or in some cases attacked due to their race. This could cause them to become isolated which could cause depression.

It is the responsibility of a social worker to see past the age of a service user or their race and to help them as an individual. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2000) cited in Horner (2007, pg 141) talks about social work values and states that,

It is important that at all times social workers practice in an anti – oppressive and anti-discriminatory way. Both terms are often used interchangeably but the meaning of oppressive is different to that of discriminatory.

Anti-discriminatory practice is compulsory by legislation. This started in the Sex Equality Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Children Act 1989.

Equality is a basic principle with regards to the work the Welsh Government are doing. Before devolution there was no logical approach to inequalities in Wales. In Wales: A better country, it states that.

There are differing levels of social exclusion depending on the area in which you live. Access to resources is easier if you live in the centre of Cardiff as you are close to all of the amenities you may need, for example a Doctors surgery if you are feeling unwell or a supermarket selling copious amounts of fruit and vegetables to help provide a healthy balanced diet. If you live on the outskirts of the city where there are less houses and more open fields, you have further to travel to see a doctor or access fruit and vegetables, in most cases you need a car to access these and need to have good health in general to be able to make the journey.

In 1998, twelve out of twenty-two Local Authorities in Wales had a higher percentage of unfit housing than the Welsh average of 8.5 percent (Welsh Government, 2006). This means that more than 8.5 percent of housing in over half of Wales wasn't suitable for people to live in.

The issues social workers in Wales may come across are not only different depending on where in Wales they work but with Wales being a multi-cultural society they may come across a service user whose first language is different to their own. This does not just refer to people

speaking Welsh but also people speaking other languages from all over the World, for example, Polish and Indian amongst others. Without prior knowledge of this, it is difficult to accommodate and you may find that your questions are now fully being understood or you are not fully understanding the questions. If you know in advance it may be possible to arrange for an interpreter, this would mean that the conversation is understood and you are more likely to give that service user the help that they need. Social services in Wales are delivered to the people by the twenty-two local authorities and around 1,800 voluntary and private organisations. The law requires Local authorities to provide Social Services. There are 150,000 people in Wales that are supported by social services. The Welsh Government's responsibilities for funding, setting the policy, reviewing, inspecting and regulating social services, cover, adult and child care, support and advice, grants and community voluntary care. The foundation of the Welsh Government's Social Services and Social Care work is the 10 year strategy Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities. The strategy is put to local authorities who have a responsibility.

In conclusion, the role of a social worker is very varied and complex. Social workers face many issues while working with service users and their families. They work with people of all ages. There are many values that social workers must work to which can be found in the code of practice, outlined by the Care Council for Wales. Promoting social justice is a very important value that all social workers but work towards with service users. Everyone had personal values that they have developed as they have grown older but it is important that social workers stick to the professional values that they have agreed to uphold at all times and that their personal values do not interfere with these. Social workers work with the most vulnerable members of society and to ensure professionalism they stick to guidelines at all times. To help service users, multi-disciplinary teams are set up. These make sure that all aspect of the service users life is taken into consideration when trying to help them. It is not only Local Authorities that have social workers as part of the teams, there are also social workers working in the voluntary and private sector. The value of social justice includes the need for resources to be distributed evenly to all of society. It is the members of society that are socially excluded that find it hard to access these resources. People who are socially excluded have fewer opportunities and very often lose hope. It can be difficult to address social exclusion as people who are socially excluded are difficult to reach. Discrimination is a big part of social exclusion. People can be discriminated against because of their age, race, ethnic origin, gender and sexual orientation amongst others. There are only negative effects of discrimination which could lead to depression. Levels of social exclusion can be different depending on where people live, so no two social workers work with identical service users because they just do not exist.