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Title

Role-Played Interviews with Service Users in Preparation for Social Work Practice: exploring students' and service users' experience of co-produced workshops

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Abstract

Within a *Theory and Practice of Social Work* module, prior to embarking on practice placements, social work students practiced professional communication skills with people who had used social work services. They undertook role-played interviews with service users about real issues, which had led individuals to seek assistance in the past. Using principles of co-production, the workshop was developed in partnership with members of the University's social work service users and carers' group. Care was taken to safeguard service users' wellbeing, as well as developing an effective learning opportunity.

Drawing on evaluations by students and feedback from service users, this paper discusses the process of planning and delivering the workshops, as well as perceived outcomes for both groups. Findings indicate that students valued the opportunity to engage with service users, gaining key learning about their own practice skills. Service users described a boost to self-esteem through contributing to students' learning.

The workshop provides an example of how service user involvement in social work education has evolved from a primary focus on sharing personal testimonies to active participation in student skill development. It underlines the importance of investment in service user involvement to achieve an appropriate context for such projects to develop.

Keywords: user perspectives, skills teaching, ethics and values, co-production, preparation for practice, role-play.

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Confidentiality: Individual service users are referred to using pseudonyms in order to preserve anonymity.

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Introduction

This paper explores how a service users and carers' involvement group in one Scottish University, arrived at a point whereby six members felt confident enough in their role as student educators to allow students to practice professional communication skills with them. This involved using role-play around experiences that led them to seek social work support in the past. The paper argues that this type of engagement with students is significantly more demanding of service users than traditional forms of involvement, such as sharing personal stories, but that, with appropriate preparation and support, such an experience can be beneficial to both students' learning and service users' self esteem and personal development.

Through exploration of the planning and delivery of the workshop and drawing on evaluation by both students and service users, the paper highlights the evolution of service user and carer involvement, and will argue that this is only possible when there is investment by academic staff and group members in such work.

Whilst people who have experience of using social work services are referred to here as 'service users', this paper acknowledges that this and alternative terms in current usage, fail to accurately reflect the relationship between social workers and the people we work with (McLaughlin, 2009). It is, therefore, avoided where possible but, in the absence of a preferred alternative term, used on a number of occasions.

Background to the Workshop

The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2003) sets out the requirements and standards for social work education in the Scottish context. This includes service user and carer involvement, which is seen as integral to the development, re-approval and delivery of the BA (Hons) and MSc/PG Diploma programmes delivered by eight Scottish Universities. Service user and carer participation was initially supported by an annual Scottish Government grant of £5,000 per University for the first five years of the new degree in Scotland (2005-2010).

The Unity service user and carers' group was established in 2005 with some founder members still currently involved. A model of partnership with local services proved effective, with agency staff supporting the involvement of their members to attend monthly meetings, deliver teaching workshops etc. and becoming members of the group themselves. A range of local services were represented; five different mental health agencies, a self-advocacy service for people with a learning disability, people with a physical disability and parents of children who were receiving support from a voluntary agency. All members were white Scottish adults. Whilst the group recognized that it lacked diversity amongst its membership, in terms of representation of young people, people from minority ethnic groups and those from seldom heard groups this proved difficult to address and, whilst this cannot be explored in depth here, work on this issue is ongoing.

It soon became apparent that direct work with students was most members' main interest and that this was taking place, primarily within agency groups. For example, service users and staff from one mental health service developed and delivered a workshop on experiencing symptoms of mental ill health. Whilst this input appeared

to be effective for student learning it meant that not all group members were having regular opportunities to work with students. This was potentially divisive and early signs of a competitive dynamic began to emerge. In 2009, opportunities to work together on the production of a DVD for teaching purposes and developing a new workshop entitled 'The ideal social worker' opened the doors to a more inclusive approach to involvement. Networking opportunities arose; members got to know each other and each other's agencies better and sharing lunch following monthly meetings encouraged social contact. Relationships between members of the group, including with academic staff appeared to be strengthened and celebrations of successes such as the launch of the DVD galvanized the group as a vibrant, committed and enthusiastic body with a clear sense of group identity, shared role and purpose.

An underpinning philosophy of the group emerged as it became clear that, for the group to work well, everyone involved should feel that they were getting something out of it; benefits should be reciprocal. Ager et al. (2005) report a similar process whereby group values were forged and this is in line with guidance set out by Levin (2004). Whilst the language of co-production was not being used at the time, the operation of the group was consistent with core principles of co-production: *Reciprocity, Equality, Accessibility* and to a lesser extent, *Diversity* (SCIE, 2013). Co-production is a process, which involves working in partnership by sharing power with people who use services or are carers (SCIE, 2013). The staff involved in working with Unity attempted to promote a partnership approach so that members were welcomed, their ideas were listened to and valued and they had a central role in decision making around the work of the group.

Scottish Government funding enabled the group to take on projects such as the development of the DVD, printing of newsletters as well as the core business of reimbursing travel expenses and providing catering for meetings. As a group, members decided that payment for teaching contributions was unnecessary. Whilst this is an ethically uncomfortable position, which cannot be fully explored here, it became apparent that the established level of service user and carer involvement could not possibly be sustained if a going rate were paid for contributions, primarily because workshops involved several members at a time (up to fifteen). As a compromise position, members received gift cards on an annual basis as a token thank you. Feedback from members indicated that they valued their involvement in teaching students on a personal level, gaining confidence and increasing self-esteem. This group consolidation set the firm foundation on which it was possible to develop the role-played interview workshop.

Government funding came to an end in 2011 leading to uncertainty about the viability of properly supported service user and carer participation. At this University, one student cohort recognized the risks that lack of ring fenced funding posed to the work of the group and, valuing their involvement, organized a sponsored event in order to raise funds.

The Use of Role-Play

Role-play is a recognized method of teaching social work skills (Hargreaves and Hadlow, 1997, Wilson & Kelly, 2010, Skilton, 2011) and forms a central element of the *Theory and Practice of Social Work* module. This takes place in the semester

preceding the first assessed practice placement (Year two of the four-year honours degree and year one of the MSc/PG Diploma). The module is taught over eight days with a large group lecture and small group work format in the mornings and two practice skills groups, each working with one tutor in the afternoons. Opportunities to develop core communication and engagement skills before embarking on placements are crucial if University staff are to be confident of students' readiness to work effectively with service users (Scottish Executive, 2003, Moss et al., 2007, Skilton, 2011). Indeed, such readiness is assessed, on this module, through a video recorded role played interview along with an accompanying written assignment. The module must be passed before students can proceed to their first practice learning opportunity.

Although, undoubtedly a valuable tool for skills practice, role-play between students has limitations. Some struggle to get beyond the unreality of the scenarios they are asked to submerge themselves into, both in the roles of service user and social worker. Wilson & Kelly (2010) found that students identified role-play as a strength of preparation for practice teaching whilst also identifying the artificial nature of role-play as a weakness.

Naylor and Finger (as cited in Faherty, 1983) suggest a framework for analyzing the effectiveness of role-play in terms of *Internal*, *External* and *Interactive* consistency. They highlight the difficulties, which can arise with *Internal Consistency* when a student in service user role introduces new and contradictory information, for example. Similarly, *External Inconsistency* can arise when the student in social worker role lacks accurate information about law, policy or procedure. Issues relating to *Interactive consistency* can occur when existing role relationships e.g. being friends, impact on the reality of the role-play. This is apparent when students give overly positive feedback to each other. The opportunity to practice skills with people who have experience of using social work services seems to offer significant advantages, therefore, in terms of increasing both *Internal* and *Interactive Consistency*. Issues of *External Consistency* can be addressed by giving students time to research a scenario prior to undertaking the role-play or, as in this case, by setting learning objectives which focus on establishing a rapport and gaining an understanding of the person's concerns rather than planning any form of intervention. Practicing skills with service users who are focused on student learning, in a safe, classroom environment appears to offer more in depth learning and preparation for practice than student-to-student role-play alone. Moss et al. (2007) report that a higher degree of realism was achieved in skills labs when service users and carers were role-playing an agreed set of scenarios. Duffy et al. (2013) give an account of service users undertaking assessed role-plays with students where relevant scenarios rather than real experiences were used. Ethical concerns are highlighted around service user involvement in role-play and the use of real life experience, some of which are addressed in the following section of this paper.

Developing the Workshop

Unity members were invited to take part in a workshop, which involved using role-play with students in order for them to practice professional communication and engagement skills. A planning meeting was arranged in order for service users and carers' group members to plan the workshop with two academics, both experienced social workers, one of whom was the module coordinator as well as being convener of

the Unity group. Members opted into the session and came along on the understanding that they were under no obligation to take part in the workshop but would be able to gain a better understanding of what would be involved before deciding whether to take part and contribute to its design. Informed choice and opportunities to influence how the workshop would operate were fundamental in terms of co-production (SCIE, 2013).

Some members described themselves as familiar with role-play whilst for others it was entirely new. Everyone was given an introduction to the use of role-play in student skill development followed by an opportunity to practice role-play with a staff member and to discuss how the session would be structured.

A central concern of group members was whether or not to draw on real experiences from their past or to use fictional scenarios. Following group discussion, everyone opted to draw on an experience that had led to them seeking assistance from social work services. Members gave the rationale that it would be easier for them to draw on their own experiences and, therefore, more authentic for students. Members expressed concerns about having insufficient understanding of specific experiences to be able to elaborate accurately on fictitious scenarios. Such concerns are consistent with Naylor and Finger's consideration of *Internal Consistency* (as cited in Faherty, 1983).

Each member was supported to develop a brief written scenario as referral information to be given to students before undertaking the role-played interview. Scenarios were selected on the basis that they warranted an initial meeting, rather than being part of an ongoing situation and did not include overly complex information or that which might result in a child or adult protection response. This was intended to enable students to focus on using their inter-personal skills to engage with the individual, establish a rapport and begin to undertake an initial assessment rather than worrying about how they should respond to an urgent, high risk situation. Hargreaves and Hadlow (1997) highlight the importance of setting clearly defined learning objectives for role-play in order to avoid distraction by the many interesting issues that are likely to arise.

A further important criterion for scenario development was that Unity members were comfortable revisiting aspects of their life that had been difficult for them. This was particularly important as the students would be learning the basics of interview skills and, as inexperienced practitioners, may not always handle the encounters with complete sensitivity. Skilton (2011) highlights the potential emotional impact of crossing the boundary between role-playing and acting out one's own issues, whilst Duffy et al. (2013) raise concerns around the possibility that participation in role-play might expose service users to risk of distress and harm. With such concerns in mind, respecting members' choice to draw on their own experiences and careful preparation with opportunities to debrief were crucial.

The value of the planning meeting was particularly apparent as one member, Lorna, identified an issue, undertook a practice role play with a staff member and realized that the situation she had chosen was still too painful for her to explore in this way. She considered withdrawing from the workshop at this point but was able to identify another, less painful, issue to use for the role-play. Lorna decided to remain involved and has subsequently taken part in the workshops for two years with plans to be involved next time round. How Unity members manage the emotional impact of taking part will be discussed later.

In the first year of the role-play workshops, six members took part; five of them were users of mental health services, one also being a carer. One person had a learning disability and participated with the support of a worker from the self-advocacy group of which he was a member. Five of the same people took part in the second year, one person being unwell at the time but indicating a desire to be involved next time. The group comprised of three men and three women, all within the 50-65 years age range. It was apparent from the planning stage that this was different from other teaching sessions that members had taken part in. Those who volunteered were experienced members of the group, had been involved for several years, had good relationships with staff and with each other and had grown in confidence throughout their time with the group. They were used to taking part in sessions, which involved giving their personal testimonies, talking to small groups of students about their experiences and facilitating workshop exercises. In the second year a newer group member opted to come to the planning session but later decided not to take part in the role-play workshop, although they did take part in other teaching input. This is, perhaps, a further indication of the different level of engagement required of service user volunteers in this workshop.

Benefits to service users through involvement in social work education have been identified in a number of studies and these include having a valued role, increased skills and confidence (Brown & Young, 2008), finding the experience enjoyable (Moss et al. (2007), being valued, helping others and coming together as equals (Scheyett & Kim, 2004). Rhodes et al (2014) reported similar benefits to service user and carer educators involved in Healthcare Education. It became apparent that participation in the role-played interview workshop asked service users to step back from an *expert* role, where they shared their views on what makes a good social worker, for example. Rather, through undertaking role-play with students, they were being asked to return to a former situation where they needed help and experienced relative powerlessness. Some situations would inevitably involve a strong emotional component (Hargreaves & Hadlow, 1997). Given that documented benefits to service users, primarily relate to more traditional forms of engagement with students, it is important to be mindful that taking part in the role-play aspect of the workshop is inherently different and benefits to service user participants cannot be assumed. Therefore, both in terms of ethical partnership and the principle of reciprocity, it was important that members emerged from the sessions without experiencing a negative impact on themselves, at the very least, and hopefully experiencing benefits from their involvement. This highlights the importance of members being able to de-role from that of *service user seeking help* and resume the role of *expert with experience of using services and in educating students* by giving feedback to students and entering into discussion around issues arising from the role-play.

Service user members were, in fact, given limited guidance on how to give feedback, although they were encouraged to consider non-verbal communication and to focus on how the interaction made them feel. They were given an explanation of the purpose of the exercise and the module's role in preparing students for their first assessed practice placements. The process of giving feedback in a balanced and supportive way was also discussed. On the basis of this paper's findings, future planning sessions will pay greater attention to the process of giving feedback to students. Skilton (2011) found that training workshops for service users and carers

were successful in increasing confidence including around giving feedback, whilst 91 per cent of students in their study reported finding the feedback helpful.

The Workshops

In the first year, the opportunity for students to undertake role-played interviews with Unity members was offered as an option for students who would otherwise be undertaking role-played interview skills practice with each other. Following overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, an additional workshop was offered so that more students could take part in year one and the workshop was built into the programme in such a way that all students undertaking the *Theory & Practice* module would experience this opportunity over the course of two, two-hour workshops in future. Workshop sessions were structured so that students were allocated to triads. This allowed them to practice professional communication skills using role-play scenarios in the main class, enabling them to alternately take on the role of service user, social worker and observer. Hargreaves & Hadlow (1997) highlight the valuable learning available to students through undertaking all three roles. One tutor worked with this group of around 30 students with two Practice Educators. Their role was to facilitate the use of scenarios, observe role play and give feedback to students on the skills demonstrated.

In a second classroom, the module coordinator met with Unity members prior to the session in order to go over the workshop aims and format and to ensure that all members were feeling confident and happy to proceed. The room was set out so that each Unity member had a space with three chairs beside them. Student triads were invited to come to the room in groups allowing for one triad to work with one Unity member at a time. On arrival, the students, from each triad, were given brief scenarios. These acted as referral information and allowed the student and service user to go straight into the role played interview. For example:

‘You are meeting Michael for the first time and are visiting him at home. He has contacted the social work office, where you are on placement, with concerns about his housing support which is funded by social work.’

‘You are meeting Oliver for the first time and are visiting him at home. Oliver has a learning disability and lives with his father. He has been upset by young people in the area shouting names at him and throwing stones and would like some support in relation to this’ (NB, Oliver is being supported to take part in the workshop today by Joe who will not be participating in the role play).’

Triads were directed to the relevant service user, where those not undertaking the role of social worker took on the role of observers. After a ten-minute role-play, student observers, Unity member and in some cases the tutor, gave feedback to the student in social worker role. Triads then moved around the room so that each student in the triad undertook the role of social worker with a different service user. Once all the students had undertaken the role of social worker and received feedback, students returned to the main teaching room and another group of students joined the service users.

The tutor role involved monitoring and offering support to both Unity members and students as well as facilitating the session. Ensuring that all the students had the opportunity to work with service users necessitated maintaining tight timescales. This had implications for both student and service user experience of the workshop, as student triads often entered into lengthy discussions with service users after undertaking the role-play. This time enabled service users to come out of *service user seeking help* role and resume the role of *expert* by giving feedback to the student and sharing experiences. Whilst this was valuable in itself, time constraints meant that groups had to move on in order for others to have the opportunity to take part. Getting this balance right was important in order for service users to experience their involvement as beneficial, as well as for students to recognize the ways in which people had been able to move on with their lives and use their experiences to contribute to student learning (Sheyett & Kim, 2004, Brown & Young, 2008).

Following the sessions, the module coordinator spent time with service user group members to debrief. This is an important element of engagement, which enables both staff and service users to reflect on and learn from the experience and to ensure that individuals are feeling supported and haven't been unsettled by taking part (Duffy, 2006).

Evaluation

Evaluation was undertaken in line with the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice (British Sociological Association, 2002). Arrangements were discussed and approved by a member of the School of Applied Social Science's ethics committee.

Following the workshops students were asked to complete anonymous evaluation forms. As these were not expected to be used for publication at the time, retrospective consent was sought with students being invited to opt out if they had any objections to their anonymous feedback being used. No objections were made.

Evaluation by Unity Members took place through verbal and written feedback as well as anonymous evaluation forms immediately after the workshops. A focus group also took place several months after the second workshop. Each participant signed a consent form, agreeing to participation and to their anonymous comments being used in publication.

Student Evaluation

'I really enjoyed it. I felt that the interview with the Unity member felt almost like I was in practice as it was their real problems which allowed me to feel empathy' (Student quote, 2015).

In 2014, the workshop was optional for students (n=47) so both those who participated and those who chose not to take part were invited to give feedback. In 2015, the workshop involved all students, with two sessions scheduled into the module timetable (n=45).

The students who chose not to participate but returned evaluation forms in 2014 (n = 21) gave a number of reasons for their decision, the majority of these relating to lack of confidence and feeling that it was too soon to put underdeveloped skills into practice. There is learning from this in terms of the timing of workshops with service users, to ensure that students have the opportunity to practice skills together before hand. Several students commented that they regretted not taking part and recognized the value of the workshop.

In both student cohorts, the majority of students indicated some apprehension before undertaking the role-played interviews. In response to a question on the 2015 evaluation form; *How did you feel before taking part in the workshop?* 78 per cent of students indicated that they had been feeling nervous, worried or anxious (n=28), yet comments suggest that the experience was, in fact, positive. For example,

‘ Role-play is not as terrifying as everyone thinks; I can do this!’

In response to the question: *How did you find the experience?* 100 per cent of students who took part in the workshops and returned evaluation forms, in both cohorts, gave positive responses (n=22 in 2014 & n=36 in 2015). 100 per cent also indicated that they thought future students would benefit from undertaking the workshop.

In both student cohorts, 100 per cent indicated that they had learned something but there was wide variation in what they had learned, for example: ‘The importance of listening’, ‘Not to dive in too quickly to ‘fix’ things’, ‘To be more empathetic’, ‘How to deal with silence’, ‘To stay calm and really listen to what they say’. Whilst these different areas of learning cannot be explored in depth here, reasons for such variation might relate to a number of factors. Firstly the nature and extent of feedback they received varied widely as they were receiving feedback from different students, different service users and some also had feedback from a tutor. One member’s feedback to students was supplemented by additional contributions from his support worker.

A second potential explanation for the different areas of learning relates to variation in the role-play experience itself. At one point, the tutor supported a service user to refocus on role-play rather than engaging in a conversation with the students, for example. This might relate to the Unity member being drawn to the more comfortable role of *expert* as discussed earlier.

Given the range of responses from students, however, variation in what they learned may relate to individual learning needs. Skilton, (2011), for example, found that some students engaging in role-play had little experience of working with service users. It is likely that this will also have been the case in this workshop. As they practiced the skills of professional communication and engagement, feedback was given on students’ abilities to maintain attentive non-verbal communication, to make the individual feel comfortable, to engage in a conversation about difficult issues, to structure the interview and a myriad of other factors which contribute to effective communication in a social work context. On this basis, there appeared to be particular value in the individually tailored learning experience that the workshop offered to students.

In drawing a comparison between undertaking role-play with service users rather than with other students, feedback from both student cohorts was overwhelmingly in favour of role play with service users (86 per cent in 2014, 97 per cent in 2015). Student quotes indicated; 'It felt much more realistic', 'It was much easier to do', 'It felt much more natural', 'Feedback was much more helpful'. Some students also used the evaluation form as a mechanism for expressing their appreciation of Unity members' involvement (n= 8 in 2014, n=21 in 2015): 'Thanks Unity- really helpful to our learning', 'It's wonderful that Unity give up their own time to help students', 'Loved it- great experience. Can't wait to go on placement now'.

Service User Evaluation

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with members indicating that participation in the workshops had been a positive experience for them and that they wanted to take part again. Several Unity members focused on the importance of their role in working to produce the best possible social workers. Lorna, for example, wrote about students giving her hope for the future as they had 'treated her as a person not as an illness'. Louise wrote about working with the students so that they can become the best social workers they can be and another member wrote about the value of the workshop in tackling stigma around mental ill health.

Members indicated that participating in the planning sessions had been helpful in terms of preparation for what would happen on the day. One member stated on their evaluation form; 'They [the planning meetings] were extremely useful and made me feel empowered in being able to help and educate student social workers. Everyone has a say, the meetings are relaxed and informal and everything said is confidential'.

Service users also advised that they felt the students appreciated their involvement, they felt valued, it had increased their confidence and self esteem, they felt empowered and had enjoyed taking part. This feedback is in line with the findings of other service user involvement work (Moss et al., 2007, Brown & Young, 2008). This is, arguably the crux of effective service user and carer involvement. The sense of wellbeing that members gain through taking part underlines the importance of reciprocity in service user involvement in social work education. Without this, fewer people would continue to be involved, to give up their time for meetings, programme committees and direct work with students. This seems especially likely within a context where there is no ring fenced funding to pay people for their involvement. The camaraderie of the group, trusting relationships that have developed and the recognition that members have something important to offer social work education all contribute to the momentum of the group.

The perceived benefits to service user members should not, however, be taken for granted. Lorna talked about how she managed the emotional impact of taking part. She recognized that revisiting such painful times in her life might leave her feeling down after the session so made sure she had something nice planned for afterwards. Others referred to their own nerves about taking part. Michael also talked about having chosen an issue that he knew would not be too painful for him.

It was apparent that Unity members had assumed a nurturing role with students; giving thought to whether their stories might be distressing, so leaving out aspects that they thought would be too upsetting. They also found themselves trying to put students at ease at the start of the role-plays. Whilst realizing that this should have been the role of the student social worker, all recognized the importance of creating a positive learning environment (Hargreaves & Hadlow, 1997, Moss et al., 2007).

Unity members identified areas for development amongst the students relating to use of jargon, lack of confidence, issues with non-verbal communication and not remembering referral details such as their name or the fact that they were visiting the service user at home rather than meeting in the office. The clear focus on learning, sensitivity, insight, honesty and tact that Unity members used in giving feedback to students was impressive. They were also aware of a difference between the students across the two years; finding that they were more confident, more able to talk about issues such as confidentiality and generally seemed better prepared in the second year. This highlights the importance of preparation for students planning to engage in such a learning opportunity. In the second year, the first workshop took place two days later in the eight-day module, so students had received more taught input as well as opportunities to practice communication and engagement skills through role play with each other before working with Unity. As a result, they appear to have been able to make better use of the learning opportunity in the second year.

Members recognized that their own level of experience and confidence in the staff member and in each other helped them to undertake the role-play task, which, most felt they would not have been able to take on at an earlier stage. Michael commented that, 'Group members have the self esteem and confidence to do the role play now'.

Louise stated: 'I just feel that as the group is growing, I'm growing as well'.

Members also expressed confidence that their work was beneficial in developing student practice. Jack commented: 'I enjoyed it greatly- it gives me a sense of actually being listened to. It put the things that happen in life to great use that benefitted - I hope - the students who will be able to help change things in other people's lives for their good, so indirectly I have helped those people get their lives together'.

Conclusion and Implication for Future Practice

The workshop provides an example of how service user and carer involvement in social work education has evolved from a primary focus on sharing personal stories to active participation in student skill development (Taylor & Le Riche, 2006, Sadd, 2011, MacSporran, 2015). Whilst, there is, undoubtedly, value in the former, commitment to service user involvement can support the emergence of a culture in which service users can grow in confidence and develop their ability to engage in more challenging learning opportunities to the benefit of student learning and development. There are a number of other examples of such innovations including service user involvement in skills laboratories (Moss et al. (2007), in assessed role-plays with students (Skilton, 2011 & Duffy et al., 2013) and as mentors for social work students on observational practice placements (MacSporran, 2015).

Whilst opportunities for innovative service user and carer involvement in social work education are evident, this paper also considers the potential risks to service users if such work is not carefully planned and supported. Key factors in supporting the role-played interview workshop have emerged as:

- A well-established service users and carers' involvement group in which members' contributions are valued, staff are able to contribute both time and enthusiasm and principles of co-production underpin practice.
- Members are supported to recognize the demands and potential impact on themselves of this type of teaching contribution and choose whether or not to be involved.
- Priority is given to planning and preparation, support through delivery and debriefing time over a cup of tea.

A key finding of this paper is the importance of service users being able to resume the role of student educator following role-play with students, in order for them to experience benefits from their involvement. Sufficient time for this must be incorporated into the workshop as well as planning sessions including detailed guidance and discussion around how to give feedback.

The full impact of the loss of direct Government funding for service user and carer involvement in Scotland is perhaps still to be felt, as groups run out of funds. Further investment in service user involvement will be necessary in order to achieve and maintain an appropriate context for projects such as the role-played interview workshop to develop and to avoid tokenistic or exploitative involvement (Sadd, 2001, Levin, 2004, Ager et al, 2005, Brown & Young, 2008). This paper calls for recognition of the important contribution to social work education made by people who have experience of using social work services. It also aims to highlight the scope for innovation and development in service user involvement when appropriately supported.

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