Co-producing a Shared Stories Narrative Model for Social Work Education with Experts by Experience.

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Service user and carer involvement in social work education is a mandatory requirement in the UK. The role of service users, carers and survivors in Northern Ireland is fundamental to shaping social work students understanding of the unique life histories and experiences of others and acknowledging service user perspectives through the lens of experts by experience.

This paper outlines the organic approach the authors adopted in developing and co-producing the Shared Stories Narrative Model for supporting service users, carers and survivors to participate in the direct teaching within the undergraduate social work degree at a university in Northern Ireland. The model is the product of extensive engagement with a group of young people who have experience of social work involvement. The model will be explained and applied to a case example. Reflections from the young people (experts by experience) and social work students are included. This paper seeks to demonstrate how the Shared Stories Narrative Model can be considered an effective framework for supporting meaningful service user involvement in social work education.

Introduction

Social workers increasingly provide complex levels of support and promote wellbeing to individuals, families and communities who have experienced trauma and crisis including domestic violence and childhood abuse. As professionals, practitioners must cope with the unpredictability of their work, the complexities of the multiple issues affecting service users' lives. **Social workers** are employed in a diverse range of settings; access to support, resources and organisational structures can differ substantially. These variables may shape **social workers** ability to cope with the demands of the role. The social work degree in Northern Ireland and throughout the UK includes service user involvement as a core aspect of the curriculum to prepare students for practice and developing their skills as practitioners.

This paper provides some local context and the rationale for co-producing a Shared Stories Narrative Model with young people who have experience of intervention with social workers. It is important to note that a range of labels and terminology is used to describe the relationship between social workers and individuals who access services. These different labels 'service users', 'carers', 'clients', 'consumers' and 'survivors' in some way reference the power imbalance that exists within the relationship. The authors recognise that the language of 'involvement', 'participation' and 'partnership' are dynamic, subject to change and often contested. In this paper we will refer to service users, carers and survivors interchangeably as these are common within social work literature. **At the beginning of this journey we asked the young people how they would like to be referred to and they said, Experts by experience (EBE).**

As McLaughlin (2009, 1111) postulated 'Experts by experience' is an important reclassification of the social worker -service user relationship, as it, unlike 'service user', 'client', 'customer', or 'consumer' before it, makes a claim for a specialist knowledge base rooted in an individuals' experience of using services'.

Context: Social work education in Northern Ireland

Social work education in Northern Ireland is offered via two undergraduate pathways. A three year undergraduate degree and a two year 'accelerated pathway' for applicants who already possess a degree in a cognate discipline e.g. sociology or psychology. Social work education in Northern Ireland provides students with a unique opportunity to practise in an emerging post conflict society.

The Preparation for Practice Learning (PFPL) module, **which is the focus of this paper is undertaken by every social work student within Northern Ireland.** This is a pre-requisite module within the social work degree which must be successfully completed for students to proceed to their first Practice Learning Opportunity (PLO). **The Practice Learning Opportunity comprises 50% of the social work degree, students complete two periods of assessed practice. The first period comprises of 85 days and the second, 100 days.** For many students, this is their first experience of entering a professional working and helping relationship with service users, carers and survivors.

Context: The journey towards widening participation in Northern Ireland

Service users, carers and survivors have occupied a formal role in contributing to social work education, learning and assessment in Northern Ireland since the introduction of BSc (Hons) degree in 2004. This coincided with the establishment of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) in 2003.

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) was first introduced as a concept in 2007. It was enforced as a statutory requirement for all health and social care organisations in Northern Ireland as part of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) in 2009. This legislation places a legal duty on Health and Social Care organisations to consult with service users, carers and the wider public. Moreover, the devolution of criminal justice and policing in Northern Ireland in 2010 has changed the political landscape resulting in the re-emergence of local level democratic accountability (Author's own, 2016). In Northern Ireland, the Public Health Agency (PHA) is responsible for the implementation of PPI policy.

In 2008, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) developed a Model of Participation which draws on the co-production concept and places 'the involvement of service users and carers at the centre of regulation of the social care workforce' (McIlveen et al., 2017, 118). The Principles and Quality Standards for Participation (NISCC, 2008) **identified** six overarching principles which facilitate meaningful participation with service users, carers and survivors:

- Valuing leadership
- Promoting partnership working
- Effective communication
- Supporting meaningful involvement
- Evaluation and continuous improvement
- Governance.

Concomitantly, partnership working, co-production and co-design were emerging themes within the Department of Health (2016, 20) Report *Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together*. This proposed a focus for service users, patients and staff to be '*partners in the care they receive with a focus on self- management and choice.*' **The Report identified three key strands drawing on Slay & Stevens, (2014) ladder of citizen participation which distinguishes individuals involvement in change and improvement.**

1. Doing with.
2. Doing for.
3. Doing to.

The degree is reviewed periodically every five years to ensure it is fit for purpose and responsive to the evolving landscape of social work practice in the 21st century. The second periodic review (NISCC, 2014a) acknowledged that across the HEIs there were good examples of service user and carer involvement and recommended a regional strategy be developed to sustain involvement and widen the range of people involved including difficult -to-reach-groups. The revised Framework Specification for the degree in social work (NISCC, 2014b) includes a mandatory requirement to address issues associated with the conflict in Northern

Ireland, more commonly known as the 'Troubles' (Authors own, 2016). At the time of writing Northern Ireland is without a devolved government, has contested views amongst its citizens in relation to marriage equality and reproductive rights and is searching for stability amid the uncertainties associated with Brexit. For many commentators, it appears the people and cultures within Northern Ireland are more polarised than before the Good Friday Agreement (1998).

In 2018 a regional conference was organised 'Learning through Listening: Service users and carers contributions to social work education'. This was the first time a conference of this scale was organised in Northern Ireland. The overarching aims included the opportunity to learn about the essential contributions service users, carers and survivors are making to social work education. **This included hearing** from students about their perspectives of working with and learning from experts by experience during their professional training and how **(as a community of practice)** we can work together to build capacity and sustainability of involvement. The contributions from experts by experience and conference delegates were disseminated within A Quality Improvement Plan to Widen the Involvement of Service Users and Carers in the **Northern Ireland** Degree in Social Work, (Duffy et al., 2018).

In September 2019 the third periodic review (NISCC, 2019) was shared with practice educators, academics, practitioners and students at the annual Practice Learning Review event hosted by the Northern Ireland Degree in Social Work Partnership. It reported that 92% of social work students who participated in focus groups and an online survey for the review identified **service users, carers and survivors** input into the degree as valuable in helping to prepare them for practice.

Context: Mapping the learning journey of first year social work students

The learning journey commences in semester one of teaching, the initial beginnings of classroom based learning where students begin to conceptualise professional knowledge. Moving up a gear in the Preparation for Practice Learning module they 'road test' their interpersonal skills in readiness for the key milestone of their first placement. Figure 1 below illustrates the interconnectivity of the learning journey.

Figure 1. 'Scaffolding the learning' integrating service user involvement in social work education.
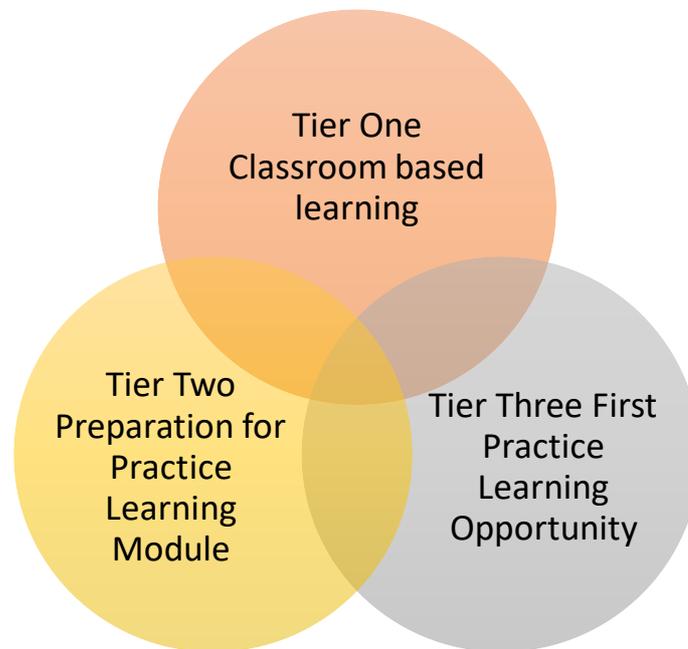
Tier One

In Tier One of the students' learning journey, the focus is on 'learning through listening' with an emphasis on helping students to make sense of the experts by experience narratives and begin to explore their own values and integrate reflective practice. This is the beginning phase for students.

Tier Two

In Tier Two the focus is on what specific skills students have used to interact and engage with individuals including experts by experience. Are they demonstrating these? How can they use feedback to improve their engagement? In the initial weeks of the module composite scenarios are used to build student competence with either the skills tutor or a peer acting out the role of the service user. **As students' progress through the module there are two key points where service users, carers and survivors participate in their incremental formative assessment.** The first takes place in week five of the skills teaching and the second

in week nine. In both sessions service users draw on their unique life histories to inform the interview with the students and offer constructive feedback to students in small groups on the students' ability to engage and relate to their narrative. For many students, this is their first experience of working directly with service users.

Tier Three

Students are placed within a range of social work settings for their first Practice Learning Opportunity (PLO) consisting of 85 days. The majority of these are statutory placements (83%) with the remainder (17%) comprising the voluntary (NGO) sector. Assessment of their practice competence includes three direct observations with service users, carers and survivors, including feedback on the students' performance.

In Tier Three of the students' initial learning journey, service users, carers and survivors' involvement **is** embedded further in the overall assessment of students' competence as developing social work practitioners. Students engage directly with service users, completing a range of tasks including, assessments, risk assessments, group work, promoting rights and needs, advocacy, working with resistance, reluctance and challenging behaviours etc. Service user feedback within the **practice learning opportunity** is a core element in supporting the practice educators' assessment of the students' readiness and preparedness to practise. Maln and Kalman (2018, 455) identified two themes which presented challenges for Swedish students on placement.

1. Feeling emotionally overwhelmed and expressions of hopelessness.
2. Interpreting principles within legislation and policy documents.

Howe (2008) postulates that implicit in the concept of emotional intelligence is a knowledge of self, specifically the emotional 'self' which is a core component of relationship based practice within the context of professional social work practice. Fook et al., (2000) recognises the role of emotional intelligence and self- questioning as key ingredients in promoting a reflexive approach for students and practitioners alike. These attributes to learning acknowledge uncertainties and focuses on the students' individual responses and judgements. Interestingly, Worsley et al (2000, 838) in their qualitative study found students rejected this

approach in favour of certainties and 'the right answer'. They conclude 'students need to make (and be helped to make) links between uncertainties in academic exploration and uncertainties in practice.'

Why Participation Matters

The importance of creating interactive learning spaces and raising awareness about human rights, violations of rights and the importance of protecting individual rights is paramount for social work students and practitioners. Social workers have a role in addressing these issues and working meaningfully to contribute to inclusive societies. The NISCC Standards of Conduct for Social Work Students **(2015, 6)** is underpinned by core professional values including 'respecting the rights, dignity and inherent worth of individuals' and the requirement to 'uphold and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.' These values resonate with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2019) e.g. Reduce Inequalities, Gender Equality and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Moreover, Reisch **(2017, 8)** writing from an American perspective asserts that 'social work can no longer promote itself as a 'value based profession' committed to social justice, dignity and human rights without recognising the importance of organising and advocating for these values at community, organisational, societal and global levels.'

Tanner et al., (2017) explored the impact of service user involvement with newly qualified social workers after their first year in employment. Their work highlights the dissonance between the two environments of university learning and direct practice with newly qualified social workers confronted with the realities of increased bureaucracy and managerialism. Wylie and first author (2017) concur the more entrenched the profession becomes in managerialism and outcome metrics the less time is afforded to building and maintaining effective relationships with service users, carers and survivors. Similarly, Leonard et al., (2015, 676) reflecting on their service user mentoring model acknowledged the disconnect between input to university teaching and input to children and family social work teams on placement commenting 'Students identified a gap between their learning from the project and how this linked to placement and the practice educator's role.'

How did we get here? The Shared Stories Narrative Model

Author's own, (2019, 53) posit that **'**Storytelling is one of the oldest ways to share information and experiences. In Northern Ireland, it is a method of sharing knowledge that transcends cultures and communities as citizens try to reconcile their contested histories and build a shared understanding of the future'. Gibson (2012, 56) comments that educating students about who they are and how this affects their practice develops their reflective abilities. Students need to understand their unique view of the world in order to recognise that alternatives exist. Over several years the authors have worked alongside service users through a process of dialogue, creating spaces and opportunities, working at a pace and place that suited individuals and reflecting on what worked and what did not. Mc Tighe (2018) asserts that narrative theory and practice are powerful interpretative tools to help us (as practitioners) and service users to understand their life experience more deeply. Through this collaboration we distilled an agreed model for sharing stories with social work students in the first year of their studies. The decision to work specifically with first year students was based on their level of experience and the learning objectives for the modules in which the experts by experience were participating (Robinson & Weber, 2013).

Power dynamics and the rules of engagement

Gubrium &Holstein **(1998, 173)** refer to the term 'narrative control' to describe when storytelling is constrained by 'institutional agendas with preferred structures, points or morals'. In developing this model with the young people (Experts by experience) it was important to identify clear boundaries about what they would share with students. This was one of the primary ethical considerations of employing this approach within social work education. Participation was voluntary and young people could opt in and opt out of involvement placing them firmly in control of the 'rules of engagement' with students. Each young person had a key worker who was present during all stages of the work to ensure consistency and continuity of care. The young people decided the pacing and frequency of their involvement. This created a learning environment for young people to teach and influence the practice of first year social work students and contributed significantly to redressing the power imbalances often associated with the social worker/ service user relationship. As experts by experience, the young people shared agreed aspects of their lived experience, their truth which some

acknowledged differed from their social workers' professional opinion of what was going on for them.

This co-production narrative model provides a framework for service users and experts by experience to share some aspects of their personal stories with first year social work students. For many of the students, this is their first experience of listening to the lived experiences of others about what social work involvement in their lives has meant for them. This is not without its challenges as Feize & Faver **(2019, 172)** reflecting on teaching social work student's self-awareness posit 'Western cultures emphasize 'self-knowledge' (knowing one's own values and preferences) more than it focuses on introspection about self-in-relation to others.'

This approach locates the person telling the story (expert by experience) at the centre of the teaching acknowledging that their voice matters and their audience of first year students are listening to their perspective. Mc Tighe **(2018, 3)** suggests that 'narrative theory looks at the ways human beings recount their experience of being human and give meaning to that experience.'

The Shared Stories Narrative Model (2019) helps to educate students about discrimination, equality, exclusion, inclusion and rights based approaches to social work practice. Creating a space for experts by experience to share a piece of their story, placing value on their personal experience and acknowledging these experiences within a local context contributes to challenging perceptions and prejudices. Understanding the intersectionality that exists in the lives of service users helps students to understand and critique social work values. Gutman et al., (2012) posit that social work education is the most appropriate space for students to effectively understand the meaning of partnership work with service users.

This level of participation requires practitioner awareness that service users are not re-traumatised by engaging in these activities with students. This is managed within the preparatory stages prior to engaging with the activity and resonates with the literature on user involvement (Hugman, 2005; Duffy et al. 2013; Ward & Gahagan, 2012; Dill et al., 2016). Drawing on Tronto's (2005) four components of care ethics the authors adapted her approach in their work alongside the experts by experience and the first year social work students.

1.Attentiveness - This requires social work students to tune in, be present and aware of the needs of the experts by experience in order to respond to them.

2. Responsibility- Demonstrating commitment to ensuring the responsibilities and rights between the social work students and experts by experience is maintained.

3.Competence- Being capable of demonstrating compassion and empathy within interpersonal dialogues.

4.Responsiveness – This is specific to the young people (experts by experience) ensuring they have a participatory role in the interaction instead of a passive one.

Figure 2. A diagrammatic representation of the four stages within the Shared Stories Narrative Model for Social Work Education with Experts by Experience.

The Shared Stories Narrative Model is a model that can be used by social work educators and practitioners to enhance social work education through the meaningful inclusion and participation of service users, carers and survivors. The model enables social work educators to work alongside experts by experience through co-production in four stages: Engaging, Collaborating, Participating and Providing Feedback. The model is cyclical and draws on the strengths based approach of building capacity and confidence.

Engaging (Stage 1) is the starting point and involves building relationships with experts by experience; social work values including respect and choice are central within this. The engaging stage involves working with service users to develop their confidence and self-esteem by embracing a definition of expertise that acknowledges the wisdom of service users, carers and survivors. The engaging stage includes exploration and consideration of the ways in which individuals, and groups want to be involved in social work education and how this can be facilitated and achieved.

Collaborating (Stage 2) is the preparatory stage before working directly with social work students in small groups. This is a collaborative process involving the lecturer, key worker and the expert by experience negotiating and agreeing expectations and boundaries. For example; consent, confidentiality and information sharing. A positive relationship between the lecturer, key worker and expert by experience is essential to discuss and agree what information to share and what not to share. Finally, a case scenario is agreed which reflects the personal narrative (story) of the expert by experience.

Participating (Stage 3) the expert by experience participates directly in interviews with social work students. There are two key elements within the participating stage. Firstly agreeing the expectations of the expert by experience and the boundaries with students within the learning and teaching session through negotiating a group contract. Secondly, the expert by experience shares their narrative with the student group. Social work values are central to this including respect, choice, confidentiality, compassion, and empathy.

Providing Feedback (Stage 4) involves the expert by experience providing constructive feedback to students. **This stage offers an opportunity to reflect** on and evaluate the skills demonstrated by the students. The expert by experience is encouraged to be open and honest in their feedback. The feedback provided needs to be realistic and balanced by identifying student strengths and areas for future learning. **It is important that students are receptive to the feedback and acknowledge their personal learning in relationship building and developing rapport.**

This four stage model has been developed drawing on the authors' experience of working alongside young people and reflects the incremental stages of the experts by experience journey. The model can be used as an innovative tool for practitioners and social work educators to realise their commitment to co-production and service user involvement. A case example of how this model was applied to support one of the young people, Betty, to participate in the teaching of social work students at a university in Northern Ireland is included below. Whilst Betty's participation is presented as a case example the authors have included feedback from other young people who also contributed to the learning and development of the first year social work students. The authors have included practitioner prompts in text boxes after each stage of the model.

Betty's story

Betty is 19 years old. She identifies as gay, Irish. Betty has an extensive care experienced background and she is currently residing in supported accommodation. Betty has struggled with mental ill health issues and avails of support services within the local community. Betty is a young people's ambassador for a voluntary sector agency and prefers expert by experience instead of the term service user. Betty is interested in body art and enjoys watching TV and listening to music.

Engaging (Stage 1)

After expressing an interest in meeting first year social work students, Betty accompanied her key worker to a site visit at the university as part of an initial induction to the social work degree. Betty then attended, along with some of her peers, a taught lecture with agency staff and contributed to the teaching materials by introducing herself to the students. During the session Betty participated in a brief question and answer session with the students.

Practitioner Prompts

- In what ways would you like to be involved in the class?
- How would you like to be involved in contributing to the teaching materials?
- What level of participation is comfortable for you?
- What are you comfortable discussing with the class?
- What are you not comfortable discussing?

Collaborating (Stage 2)

It is important to note that throughout the collaboration process with Betty she was supported by her key worker with input from the lecturer. This stage in the process focuses on negotiating and agreeing expectations and boundaries to the stories which Betty will share with the first year students. Within this stage confidentiality was discussed with Betty. Storyboard templates were designed to help map out the part of her story to share. With the support of her key worker, and the lecturer, Betty co-produced a case scenario which reflected part of her personal story as a young person who has experience of social work involvement.

Practitioner Prompts

- What do you want the students to know?
- What do you not want the students to know?
- What is appropriate to share?
- What is not appropriate to share?
- What are you comfortable sharing?
- What are you not comfortable sharing?

Participating (Stage 3)

Participation is a reciprocal process. It was agreed with the class beforehand that part of the process would be to use dialogue and conversation to create new meaning and understanding and to this end, to expect Betty to ask questions of them. At the beginning of the class, ground rules such as confidentiality, power dynamics and respect etc. were discussed and a group contract was agreed. Betty participated by sharing her story during the PFPL skills session with a small group of students. Betty did this by completing one to one role plays with students. She provided the students with the opportunity to practise and develop both their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in a safe environment in preparation for their first social work placement. In addition to their participation in the role plays with experts by experience, the

students were asked to reflect on the three questions identified in the practitioner prompts below.

Practitioner Prompts

- What do you think makes a good social worker?
- What did you want to learn from today?
- How were you feeling about today?

Providing Feedback (Stage 4)

The authors agreed a feedback loop with the experts by experience acknowledging that for many of the students it was their first time interviewing and for the young people it was their first time providing feedback. We agreed that feedback would be provided after each role play. Betty provided constructive feedback to every student to help develop their skills. Betty focused her feedback on 3 key areas.

Practitioner Prompts

1. What did the student do well?
2. What does the student need to do more of?
3. What can the student develop for the next session?

Reflections from experts by experience

Betty met with the authors and some of her peers after the session with the students. The debriefing session provided the young people with the opportunity to share their experiences of interacting with the social work students. We talked about the session with the students and their initial thoughts of what went well and what didn't go well. We have included some examples of practitioner prompts below which helped to frame the conversations with the young people.

Practitioner Prompts

- How did you feel about contributing to the session?
- What went well?
- What didn't go well?
- Is there anything that could be done differently for the next session?
- Are there any further supports that could be put in place? If so, what?
- Did any issues arise?
- Future learning?

From Betty's point of view, she summarised

I really enjoyed this experience. I had the opportunity to talk with students and to make it real for them. I also liked giving the students feedback as I know what is good and what is not good when trying to build a relationship with young people.

Chris was also positive about his experience

It was important to prepare my story in advance. I felt like I was in control then. It was my story to tell and I think it helped them (the students) to see there is more to me than a case file in a locked cabinet.

Zoe commented: Its mad to think that we are actually in a university teaching first year social work students. It kinda makes you think, we could be sitting there learning to be social workers.

Daniel was more critical: I didn't like the way he (the student) said he was tuning in to my circumstances. He only met me. Like he knew everything about me so why did they need to talk to me. It came across like he was the expert in my life and not me.

Relationship building and sustaining involvement

Relationship-based social work is fundamental to applying the Shared Stories Narrative Model to practice. Trevithick **(2012, 13)** posits that 'the client-worker relationship should be at the heart of social work'. Prior to the engaging stage (stage 1) it was important to spend time with the young people and build positive relationships. The pace and frequency of contacts was directed by the young people. Using a person-centred approach was central to the relationship building stage as this promoted an equitable relationship and reduced power imbalances. Central to this was an awareness of our communication styles and an openness to engaging with young people through a range of indirect methods.

Within our experience of working with children and young people the onus is with the practitioner to identify creative ways to engage with children and young people who have experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences. Including trauma, numerous changes in social workers, their perception of social services and feeling as though their views are not heard or valued. **Consequently**, as practitioners the *stickability factor* is essential when working with children and young people which involves being consistent in your approach being reliable and listening to the young person's narrative. This resonates with the work of Warren (2008).

In developing the Shared Stories Narrative Model the authors assert that positive and constructive service user participation is dependent upon several factors including:

- The importance of investing in relationships between all those involved in the process (young people – university lecturer – agency keyworker).
- Building trust and mutual respect.
- Providing a safe and supportive environment.
- The benefits of observation – experts by experience attending the campus/ getting a feel for the spaces used for teaching/ being able to sit and watch lecturer-student interactions to develop their confidence.

What did the social work students learn?

This learning experience presented an opportunity to introduce first year students to macro social work practice (Knight & Gitterman, 2018). Creating opportunities to listen and interact with the experts by experience enabled students to question their understanding of the concept of social justice and begin to identify the growing inequalities within society and the impact of these inequalities on individuals, groups and communities. The authors assert this involves the ability to develop cultural competence, self -awareness, an understanding of your own values and social location alongside acknowledgement of the strengths and capacity in others. This aligns with the BASW Code of Ethics (2014, 8) which states 'social workers, individually, collectively and with others have a duty to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation, and work towards an inclusive society'.

The participation of the experts by experience contributed to building a learning environment which required students to consider what they 'bring with them' on their professional learning journey to becoming a social worker. Students completed minute papers as part of the feedback loop agreed for the module. **The minute paper is a classroom evaluation technique which asks for brief feedback on the session and can be completed in a minute or two.** Some of their comments are captured below.

Student 1: I can relate to Betty's story as I grew up in a kinship care placement. When I think back to being Betty's age, I would not have had the confidence to share my story with anyone never mind a group of social work students. It is good to see that the system is changing. Today's session was authentic and refreshing.

Student 2: I had many preconceived ideas (some positive and negative) about meeting the experts by experience. What I took away from today was that I need to be more aware of my own personal value base so that I do not become an oppressive social worker.

Student 3: Listening to the stories from the experts by experience today has made me think about what kind of social worker I want to be. It is the simple things like taking time to get to know the young person and stopping for a minute to think about how the other person feels given all the stuff they are dealing with. The importance of viewing service users and carers as experts will stay with me for my studies and beyond.

Student 4: For me, I was nervous going into the interview and even more nervous hearing feedback from Betty, she was really positive, and it made me think about power and how it would feel as a service user waiting to hear your social worker's decision.

Considerations in Using the Shared Stories Narrative Model

As part of their learning journey students need to be able to work with service users in a way that promotes inclusion and meaningful participation. The application of the narrative model is the beginning stage for service user participation as experts by experience share their lived experience, knowledge and perspectives with students in the PFPL module. It also provides students with the opportunity to challenge stereotypes and personal values in a safe environment in preparation for their first **practice learning opportunity**.

Another important aspect to consider is resilience. Dill et al., (2016) discuss the negative impact that less than positive feedback can have on students and this has been observed by the authors. Building the feedback component into the Shared Stories Narrative Model created a space for the young people to provide constructive feedback to students. It is a learning curve

for students and one that helps them to acknowledge that social work is a challenging profession, in which we are often working with people whose lives have been severely impacted by a myriad of different life events and circumstances. This also helps students to **recognise** that experts by experience knowledge is not focused on negatives; the young people were able to share aspects of the positive experiences they have had and what this meant to them. It is important to encourage service users to become actively involved in social work education in ways that are flexible, accessible and responsive to where they are at in their own lives. **Social Care Institute for Excellence (2013) highlighted** the need for ongoing review to ensure that co-production is meaningful and making a difference for all of those involved.

Preparing students for placement

Whilst this model has been developed to promote service user involvement within social work training in Northern Ireland, it can also be applied with students in university with their tutor through individual or small group tutorials. The individual and group tutorials can be the starting point for students to explore and examine their own personal value base and attitudes held prior to starting their learning journey (Harrison, 2009).

Developing self-knowledge

The model can be used in supervision between a student and practice educator. Our own personal narrative is derived from our own personal experience which helps to shape our life story. Miehls & Moffatt (2000, 339) comment 'the student's complex self is fundamental in the development of the social work identity.' As students begin their social work **practice learning opportunity** it is important that they understand their own personal narrative and reasons for wanting to be a social worker. This resonates with the work of Lister (2000, 131) who highlighted the importance of 'the exploration of personal values and political beliefs as fundamental to social work training.'

It is important for students to ask themselves:

- What do you feel makes a good social worker?
- What do you think you will be expected to do as a social worker?

McTighe (2018, 173) concurs 'it is essential that we be deeply in touch with that story and the way it motivates us.'

Conclusion

The authors assert that the Shared Stories Narrative Model has something to offer in helping to build capacity, sustainability and involvement of experts by experience and service users' perspectives within social work education. This is not a 'quick fix' model. It requires authentic and genuine relationship building over time with individuals who want to contribute to educating social work students by sharing their expert knowledge of what it is like to have social work involvement in their lives. Levy et al., (2015, 876) concur 'Getting to know service users and carers at a personal level, requires valuing service users and carers as individuals and valuing the knowledge and experience they have.' The authors assert that the Shared Stories model is central to introducing social work students to the 'self-other' relationship dynamic. Young people recognised as more than their story (Sadd, 2011) or a case file, instead as experts with specialist knowledge to exchange and share with students at the beginning of their professional learning journeys. Students need to develop their emotional and relational skills for professional practice by making meaning from learning through listening.

The case example in this paper illustrates how the model is ideally suited to support experts by experience to share 'managed' aspects of their unique life histories with social work students. This process enabled the young people we worked with to develop their confidence and self-esteem as captured in some of their feedback comments. It also opened the door for social work students to consider the impact they may have (positive or negative) when building relationships with service users, carers and survivors who often do not have a choice in the worker they are allocated.

For social work educators and practitioners the Shared Stories Narrative Model offers an inclusive framework to coordinate and embed service users, carers and survivors pivotal involvement in educating the future social work workforce.

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