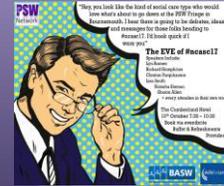
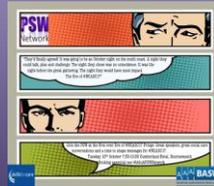


Who Is Leading The Way?

An introductory report on the world of social work leadership

10th October 2017



Understanding the current picture of Social Work in leadership and management across England

As part of its annual work plan the Adult Principal Social Workers Network wanted to ask some questions and start a debate. These questions, at the start, were about the make up of practice leadership. The prevalence of social work qualified leaders and where they sit within our social care systems. We also wanted to ask the question about diversity and gender across social care and social work leadership.

Within the network we'd started a debate as to whether some of those core values of equality, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice were lived and reflected upon within our own hierarchies. This coupled with wanting to understand the extent to which social work permeated and supported the leadership of local authorities and our own Principal Social Work Network led to us asking the question.

In the summer of 2017 we started the long process of writing to local authorities across England asking a set of questions to try understanding these very issues. We also used our annual Principal Social Workers survey to pose some of the same questions to ourselves. This brief introductory report starts to explore what we found.

So what did we do and what did we ask?

Freedom of information requests were sent to 141 Local Authorities

We asked how many board members or senior managers that reported to the Director of Adults Service there was.

How many of that group were qualified Social Workers

Was the Director of Adult Services a Social Worker?

Was the PSW a board member or a senior manager that reported to the Director of Adult Services?

What was the Gender Split of these senior managers?

What was the Ethnicity Split (by census status) of these senior managers?

In 2016 the National Children's and Adults Services Conference took place in Manchester. The Principal Social Worker Network held a meet and greets session in partnership with the Chief Social Worker. Whilst there, the very questions that the network wanted to consider seemed visibly relevant. In posing this tweet Co-chair Rob Mitchell helped get the question out in the open



#NCASC16
Rob Mitchell
@RobMitch92

Looking around #NCASC16 Conference I have to question whether the diversity in this hall reflects society & social work

In January via a brief blog from Co-chair Mark Harvey on his blog site Mwharvey blog we started to think about how we could trigger the conversation

'Do Nothing'... Isn't it time we had a conversation about diversity?

[Mwharvey](#) / [January 18, 2017](#)

This blog / question / reflection is one I have been pondering for a while now. Last night whilst listening to a few [Specials](#) and [Skints](#) tracks on the train home I thought it was time I put it out there (the music may or may not have informed my resolve).

I am incredibly lucky to work in a profession that, at its core, values everybody no matter how society perceives them. A profession that seeks to ensure social justice, equality and human rights are accessible to all and where they are absent does something about it.

I am increasingly asking myself whether we apply the same values to our own profession and social care as a whole. Social work at a front line operational level is one of the most vibrant and diverse professions I know. Reflective of our communities, neighbourhoods and cultures but does this diversity play out throughout our sector and more interestingly our hierarchies.

I increasingly find myself asking this question as I attend conferences and national network meetings. Looking around the rooms and audiences I don't see the same diversity that I do in our teams and operational management. This includes the very networks that Social Workers and Principal Social Workers are shaping and forming as we take our profession on new modernising journeys. The PSW network albeit in its infancy feels like it also conforms to this potential lack of difference.

Trips to NCAS, academic events, as a speaker at conferences across the country or sitting on various committees does not tend to make me reconsider whether this question needs to be asked. It generally reinforces it. Certainly my presence does not change or break the homogenous mould.

So as a profession and sector that would be the first to challenge lack of opportunity, glass ceilings and people's rights, have we stopped looking at ourselves? Is it not time that we had an honest discussion about whether this is a question we must consider and how we do that in the most productive way possible. Most importantly if it is a reality what are we going to do about it?



The Adult PSW
Network
Is Co-chaired by

Mark Harvey
&
Rob Mitchell

Vice Chair Karen
Cook



Our Freedom of Information requests & PSW survey received the following number of responses



We received 124 full and partially completed responses

17 Local Authorities gave no response or declined to respond

Responses accounted for 964 board members / senior managers that report directly to the Director of Adult Services

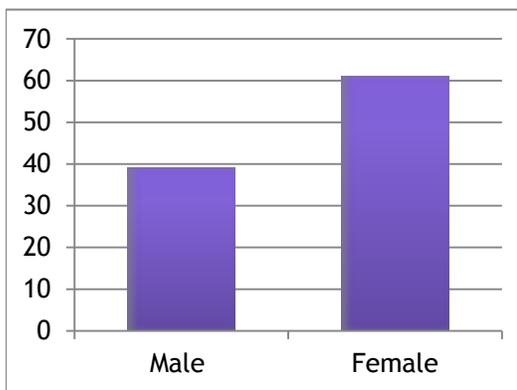
The Annual Principal Social Worker survey received 111 Adult and joint (adult/children single role PSW) responses

The Principal Social Worker responses focused on ethnicity and gender questions

Of the 124 Local Authorities that responded the two areas where they tended to decline to provide the information or state that it was not held were in relation to Gender and Ethnicity. The most common reason for not providing or being able to provide the information was that it was exempt under Section 40 Part II of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This accounted for 206 senior managers or board members in relation to the ethnicity question and 23 in relation to the gender question. At the time of completing the PSW survey we had details for 157 PSWs, which equated to a 70.7% response rate.

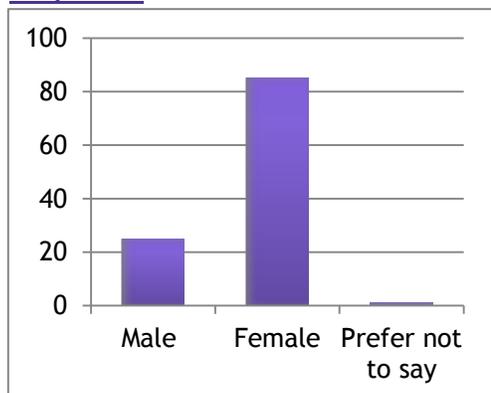
Across England our Local Authority boards and senior management teams show a majority of women hold these positions. 61% of this management group was female with 39% male making up our statutory social care leaders. Whilst a significant female majority in senior leadership was evidenced it may still appear to be out of kilter with the wider picture. The social care workforce is one almost exclusively delivered by women with 82% being female (1).

LA ASC Board & Senior Management team Gender Split Sept 2017



The Adult Principal Social Workers Network showed a slightly closer correlation to the National Workforce with a 76% / 23% Female to Male Split.

Adult PSW Network Gender Split July 2017



International Federation of Social Work - Global Definition of Social Work
 “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing

In his article 'Debate over principal social worker role obscures senior leaders missing links to practice' Brendan Clifford suggests, "the weakening of the link between the statutory director role and the social work qualification is perhaps another way in which the social work profession has been devalued" (2).

Does this perception of a lack of social workers in senior leadership and directors of adult services roles reflect reality? Of the 964 responses we received just 43.7% held a social work qualification. As part of that percentage, Directors of Adult Care Services were 63% of those that held a social work qualification. This would suggest that the majority of those senior managers that held a social work qualification were indeed Directors. What was less clear given the nature of some of the responses was whether these senior managers had retained the HCPC registration and by default their CPD and evidence base to practice.

Based on how Local Authorities who responded are set up for Social Work Leadership 46% of PSWs were not deemed senior managers nor sat on any boards that met. Given the statutory Care Act guidance this seems to be of significant concern. Whilst you can still advise the Director without being part of this set up the ability of the PSW to lead and influence across complex systems would be significantly hindered

63% of Directors of Adult Social Services were Social Work trained and qualified

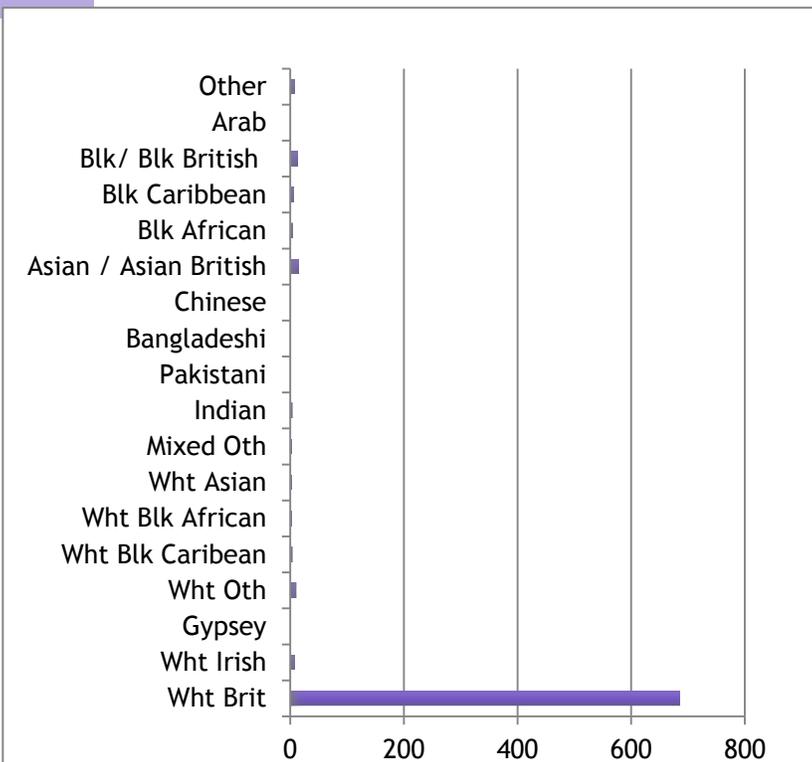
The Adult Social Worker Workforce Is down 3% since 2012

Source 'Skills for Care - The state of the adult social care sector And workforce in England' 2017

LA ASC Board & Senior Management Ethnicity make-up

The picture for diversity at a senior and board level is a little more concerning. Despite Local Authorities declining to share or not holding the information of 206 managers in focus we were able to understand the ethnicity of 757 Local Authority senior individuals. The picture was one almost exclusively of white senior leadership. 90.4% of all senior managers / board members were White British. If you include other self-reported white ethnicities this would raise to 92.6%. This figure appears shocking on its own but if you consider that our social care BME workforce, dependent on region, is, at its smallest is 17% rising to 59% at its highest (3). Furthermore these are figures that do not reflect the very communities and societies that social care strives to work alongside.

Does the PSW Network fare any better? Certainly not. 87.3% of PSWs reported as white British with a span of ethnicity only covering 3 BME groups.



"It can be daunting if you think the culture isn't welcoming. You aren't going to put yourself out there because your instinct is to protect yourself
Clenton Farquharson

'We've not broken the barrier': how can social care tackle its diversity deficit - Skills for Care / Guardian Society

A more detailed research paper will follow up this introductory report but we thought it was important to share our initial data and ask a difficult question, has social care got an institutional problem that we are ignoring? The lack of loud criticism may leave us either ignorant or comfortable in our thinking but it is time to challenge and be open.

Social Work is a profession that prides itself on its values base, ethical approach and passion for equality, yet seems to shy away from engaging on this issue. It's time to stop look and change, we would not accept it elsewhere in public service, and we must not in our own social care world.

Time for debate but more importantly time for action. Not just in our own PSW Network but in ADASS, LGA and many others, will you join us?