



## **Critical Social Work Practice**

*Continuing involvement in Changing Lives*

### **Nick Balneaves**

A number of users and carers have continued to be involved in the 21st Century Social Work Review, feeding into the implementation process. Why do John and Debbie think that continued involvement is important?

### **John Dow**

If we're not involved with the implementation and running with this piece of work, then there is an opportunity for the great and the good to say we tried, we didn't get them involved, but at least we showed that we ... we had an effort to involve them and we will now go with what the professionals through employment want rather than through the professions through experience want. And that would be terrible. It would be a waste of valuable resources.

### **Debbie Berry**

I've said all along one of the reasons I got involved with the user and carer panel, was because I see relationship between myself and social work very much as a partnership, and if they don't use us in the implementation process they ... they do lose a great opportunity to continue a partnership with users and carers.

### **Nick Balneaves**

Over the next few years there will be perhaps quite a lot of disruption to services because of Changing Lives and with the best will in the world, some people could still find their services disrupted. What do you need to make that work for you?

### **John Dow**

For me, individually and certain ... certainly two people that I ... and firmly support, what they need is to see that that the light at the end of the tunnel may be getting dimmed a wee bit, but it isn't going to get switched off.

### **Debbie Berry**

Most people I know, who use services are fairly intelligent, articulate people who are quite capable of understanding that certain changes have to take place. But I think if ... if these changes are explained to us and we're given time to adjust to the changes, then I think ... then we can take change as users.

### **Nick Balneaves**

Throughout this programme we've heard a range of practical experiences of change. We've heard opinions on how change can be made to work as well as hopes and fears about the 21st Century Social Work Review. But perhaps it's important as well to take a broader view. Ian Ferguson is a senior lecturer in social work at the University of Stirling. How does he think social workers should approach a report like Changing Lives?

### **Ian Ferguson**

Critically. I ... I think there is ... there is an idea which I think comes from management theory that people are naturally resistant to change. This may or may not be true. But I think it's important that people look at the changes that are being proposed and critically assess them.

### **Nick Balneaves**

Why do you think they should approach it critically?

**Ian Ferguson**

Because I think there are a whole range of different agendas involved here. I think there are workers' own agendas, which are often about the ... the reasons they came into social work in the first place, which in the vast majority of cases was and remains to make a difference. I think that there are government agendas and Scottish Executive agendas which have perhaps a different vision for social work, which see the role of the state in a different way, which see the role of welfare in a different way and I think there's often conflict between these agendas. Service users and carers may have particular perspectives too. So I think that it's necessary to stand back and look at the thing as a whole and see which aspects best promote some ... some of these visions of ... of social work. So I think ... I think people need to not, in the jargon, embrace change uncritically, I think they have to look at the direction of the change and ... and whose benefits is this change taking place.