‘What has sustainability got to do with social work?’

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Overview

- Introductions and interest in the workshop
- Social work in the UK
- International imperatives
- What does sustainability mean?
- Processes, skills and examples of community social work
- Social work education and examples of practice in the UK
- Discussion
‘The Caravan’ by Richard Creed
Why sustainability matters

Community incidents in the UK, most notably flooding – Hull, Tewkesbury

The impact of climate change - effects on health, fractured communities, the movement of populations

The role of social work in emergency planning

Human services - working with communities
Why sustainability matters

- Recognise the dissonance in people’s aspirations for higher standard of living rather than quality of life.
- Connecting with the relationship between food production and community.
- Recognise the way consumerism locks us all into particular groups and options.
Sustainability and social work

-no reference to sustainability in current UK imperatives for social work
http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00602-2010

-State abdication of responsibility for welfare
http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2011/03/10/116434/Government-could-abolish-all-council-social-care-duties.htm?printerfriendly=true

-State has no solutions, communities left to find their own.
International Policy Statement on Globalisation and the Environment

‘IFSW calls on social workers and their representative bodies to recognise the importance of the natural and built environment to the social environment, to develop environmental responsibility and care for the environment in social work practice and management today and for future generations, to work with other professionals to increase our knowledge and with community groups to develop advocacy skills and strategies to work towards a healthier environment and to ensure that environmental issues gain increased presence in social work education’.

http://www.ifsw.org/p38000222.html
Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Environmental Sustainability

- Disasters of natural and human origin, management and prevention
- Involvement of local communities in developing responses
- Implications for sustainable social development
- Protecting the physical environment
- Proactive engagement with social, human and ecological development

http://www.ifsw.org/p38002163.html
“The fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet basic human needs”

“Social development and environmental management in the interests of present and future human welfare”

“....promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being”

From the BASW Code of Ethics

“......development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”

Brundtland Commission Report (WCED 1987)

Extract from the IFSW definition of Social Work

PUTTING SOME PIECES TOGETHER

Andy Whiteford, 2011
Defining terms, seeking connections

What does sustainability mean to you?
Sustainability

- Economic sustainability or the potential for an organisation to continue to generate sufficient income to continue its core business.

- Environmental sustainability: the deep ecology of the earth as a total and self-regulating system (Lovelock, 2000).

- The need to attend to the serious global environmental and economic challenges such as climate change and peak oil already affecting much of the world’s population.

- ‘The interdependence of social, economic and environmental systems’ (McKinnon, 2008: 264)
Social Sustainability

Promoting healthy communities characterised by diversity, equity, active citizenship and intergenerational processes (McKinnon, 2008: 265)

‘Recognising the strengths that different communities bring to the social services context…Developing and delivering services that the community can sustain in the future regardless of the source of funding’, (Torr, 2010)
Sustainable Communities

- A **sustainable economy** is one that considers the long term effects of trade and business and has minimum or beneficial impact on the environment and people – wherever they are.
- A **sustainable environment** is one that maintains biodiversity without external interference.
- A **sustainable community** is a place where people want to live and work, now and in the future. It meets the diverse needs of existing and future residents.

Oz Osbourne, 2011
Community Social Work (CSW)

- Community social work is concerned with developing more accessible and effective local services (Smale 1988)
- Utilising and enhancing local resources it is an approach to practice that places individual needs and capacities within a social and political context and which responds through individual and collective action
- Social Work which ‘seeks to tap into, support, enable and underpin the local networks of formal and informal relationships’ (Barclay Committee, 1982)
CSW Processes and skills

- Familiarisation and information gathering
- Engagement and assessment
- Organisation, planning and partnerships
- Intervention in collaboration with community members
- Mobilising resources for empowerment
- Research and evaluation
UK social work education characterised by:

- Absence of social justice, climate change, global issues or collective approaches.
- Absence of any discourse about sustainability
- Educational agendas driving towards 'factory farming instead of free range'
Education for sustainability

The term Education for Sustainable Development has largely been replaced by the idea of Education for Sustainability - a move away from the narrow ‘literate graduate’ view of Education about Sustainability, with its emphasis on content & its mission to teach about change towards an approach that opens up possibilities to emphasise personal and value based responses to sustainability.
Our response

- Education for sustainability
- Inductive teaching method
- Community Development Projects (CDPs)
Education for sustainability

- Teaching critical thinking and creativity
- Breaking down divisions between identities
  - service user/expert
  - subject discipline areas (permaculture, health, science, education, activism)
  - modular structures
- Focus on human relationships
- Students as a resource
Education for sustainability ctd.

- Focus on social justice
- Long-term thinking
- Strengths-based community approaches
- Global consciousness
References


