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Walking the Talk in Challenging Times

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SSPA National Conference
27 October 2016

Overview



- Challenging times
- Back to basics – social work responsibility
- Ethical Framework
- Walking the Talk



Challenging Times



- o The review of Child Youth and Family culminating in the establishment of a new Ministry Oranga Tamariki has generated:
 - o Uncertainty about what will constitute core business
 - o Speculation that emphasis on involvement of whānau, hapū, iwi in decision-making will be lost
 - o Lack of clarity about what services will be contracted out
 - o Lack of clarity about funding arrangements going forward – many agencies operating on year by year funding in the interim

Challenging Times

- o The Community Investment Strategy – Update 2016
 - o Focusing more clearly on priority results
 - o Building the evidence base
 - o Improving the quality of data collection
 - o Setting a clear direction for funding
 - o Further simplifying compliance requirements and including result measures in contracts
 - o Continuing to build provider capability
- o Increasing demands in a climate of uncertainty
 - o How will evaluation be funded?
- o Contractual requirements in relation to sharing identifying data
- o Agencies jockeying for position as ‘favoured’ service providers

Challenging Times



- Children's Action Plan
 - Emphasis on collaboration and co-ordinated multi-agency intervention
 - Expectation that non-government agencies will take on lead professional roles for Children's Teams with no funding to support this
 - Increased requirements around safety checking of workers
- Review of Family Violence services
 - Will there be coordination of CAP and Family Violence strategy?
 - What will happen to existing services?

Challenging Times

- o Strong possibility that social work registration will become mandatory
 - o Cost implications for NGOs
 - o Minimum requirement of four year degree presents challenges for those wanting to move into social work at a later stage in life
 - o Withdrawal of NGO scholarships
 - o Potential for 'fit and proper' requirements to exclude people who have faced challenges earlier in life



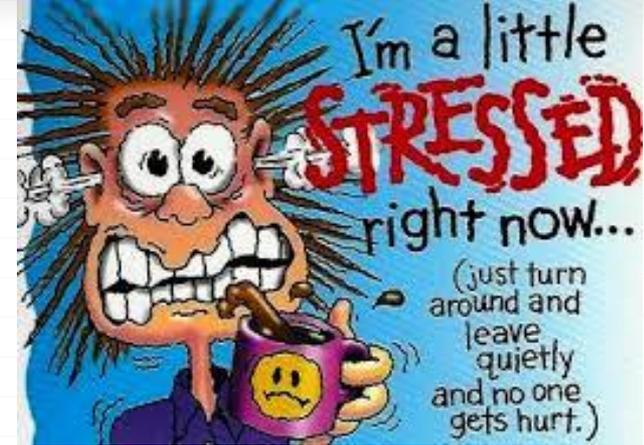
Social Workers
Registration Board

Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

Challenging Times

- Challenges identified by Mike O'Brien (2016) include:
 - How we manage situations in which there is pressure to close cases in order to fulfil contractual obligations but the family continues to need and requests further services
 - Managing government requests for information about clients
 - Balancing surveillance and support
 - Ensuring culturally appropriate services
 - Ensuring effective responses to Māori over-representation in state care
 - Possibility that contracts will include “gagging” clauses
 - Manipulation of data to demonstrate outcomes
 - Meeting ethical and professional obligations
 - Who will determine who gets support and services?

Impact



- Increased stress at micro and meso levels
 - Workloads
 - Uncertainty about funding
 - Difficulty providing holistic response to families
 - Time limits imposed by contracts creating tensions when intervention is still needed
 - Ethical dilemmas heightened with increasing expectations around surveillance role
- Within agencies and in our inter-agency relationships we end up mirroring the dynamics and survival strategies of the individuals, families, groups and communities we are purporting to support



Impact



- Difficult choices are made (often unconsciously)
 - Allowing contractual obligations to define role
 - Surviving on a day-by-day basis making sure not to rock the boat
- Such responses lead to loss of identity as a professional social worker
 - Burnout
 - Despair
 - Anger directed at government, funders, agency, and sometimes service users
 - While entirely understandable (and human) we cease to be able to support people on their journey to change



Back to Basics

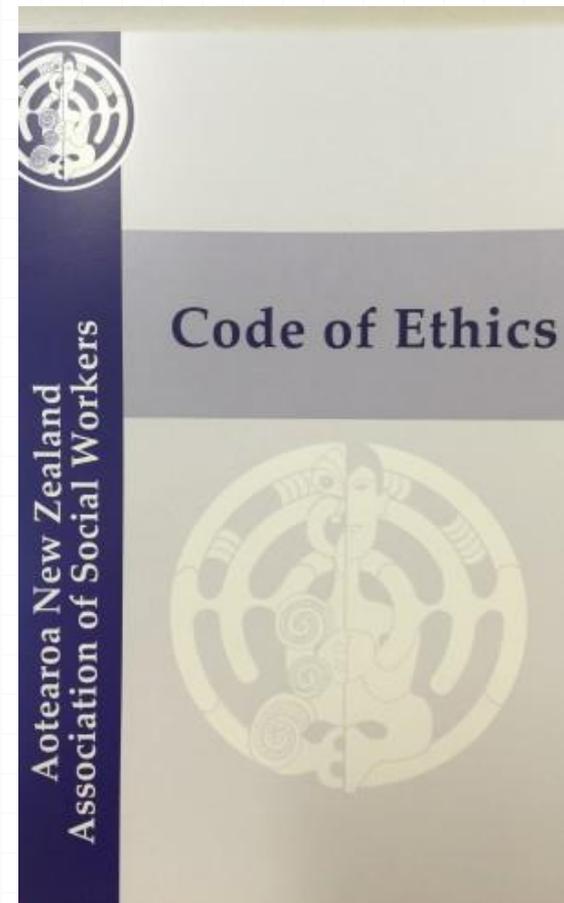


o Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. 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.

(IFSW Global definition of social work)

Back to Basics

- The ANZASW Code of Ethics reminds us that social work has always had a dual focus:
 - To enable and empower individuals, families groups and communities to find their own solutions to issues and problems and
 - To learn from specific instances of need to inform society about the injustices in its midst, and to engage in action to change structures that create and perpetuate injustice
- Many consider that the second aspect is tantamount to “biting the hand that feeds us” and a step too far.



Ethical Framework

- Responsibility for Te Tiriti o Waitangi based society
- Responsibility to the wider community which includes advocating for social justice and inclusion
- Responsibility to clients
- Responsibility to agencies and organisations
- Responsibility to colleagues
- Responsibility in supervisory relationships
- Responsibility for self
- Responsibility for research and publication





Keep hope alive

Walking the Talk



- At the micro level we need to ensure that we are in a place that allows us to keep hope alive for the people we work with
- No matter how challenging our work situations are, we cannot be effective if we are mired in despair
- Research informs us that the critical factor in determining effectiveness is the quality of the relationship
- We need to draw on our theoretical and practice knowledge about what makes a difference
 - Resilience –the importance of protective factors and networks of support
 - Strengths-based practice
 - Share stories of resistance and change



Walking the Talk



- At the meso level agencies need to ensure that front-line workers are supported to empower the people they work with
 - Access to reflexive and developmental supervision
 - Treated with respect and dignity in the workplace
 - Respond proactively to issues and concerns raised
 - Access to professional development
 - Positive culture that embraces biculturalism and diversity
- Agencies also need to ensure that all staff are supported to engage effectively in collaboration and coordinated service delivery

Walking the Talk

- Competitive contracting generates distrust and conflict
- Interagency relationships need to reflect the core values of our profession
 - Respect
 - Open and honest dialogue to address any issues
 - Transparency
- It is difficult for any one agency to challenge contractual arrangements and collective responses may be needed to push-back in situations where expectations are unreasonable or resources are not available





Conclusion



- o I warn my students that social work is not for the faint-hearted
- o These are challenging and uncertain times
- o We are, however, in a privileged position relative to our clients
- o The rhetoric of investment and the demand for evidence-based practice creates an opportunity to demonstrate what is possible
- o We need to adopt a “can do” attitude that embraces the potential to achieve transformation through innovation