SOCIAL WORK, HEALTH AND THE HOME
NEW DIRECTIONS IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

A two-day workshop hosted by the Centre for the History of Health and Healthcare at Glasgow Caledonian University

Convenors: George Campbell Gosling
and Professor John Stewart

11-12 April 2011
PROGRAMME

DAY ONE
MONDAY 11TH APRIL

10.30am  Registration and coffee

11am  SESSION ONE: SOCIAL WORK BEFORE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Dr Alysa Levene, Oxford Brookes University
Home visiting, childhood and the family in the late eighteenth century

Stephen Byrne, Oxford Brookes University
Collective responsibility and the child protection movement in late Victorian Britain

Dr Graham Bowpitt, Nottingham Trent University
The Protestant ethic and the spirit of social work: Revisiting theological accounts of the profession’s origin

12.30pm  Lunch

1.30pm  SESSION TWO: DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Dr Georgina Brewis, Institute of Education
‘Social work has ceased to be fashionable’: Students, social service and social study, c.1900-1920

Lynn Bruce, University of Glasgow
‘A place to train social workers’: the Scottish Settlements, c.1905-1920

George Campbell Gosling, Oxford Brookes University
Gatekeepers of Medical Charity: The Lady Almoner and the pre-NHS hospital system, 1895-1948

3pm  Coffee break

3.30pm  SESSION THREE: SOCIAL WORK IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Prof John Stewart, Glasgow Caledonian University
‘I thought you would want to come and see his home...’: Psychiatric social work and child guidance
Dr Pamela Dale, University of Exeter  
*Contrasting responses to unmarried motherhood in two communities in the 1940s: A new sphere for health and welfare workers?*

Mike Burt, University of Chester  
*Ascertainment to assessment: Developing a role for social workers in local authorities, 1950-1975*

5pm  
*End of day*

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**DAY TWO**  
**TUESDAY 12th APRIL**

**9am**  
**SESSION FOUR: SOCIAL WORK IN SCOTLAND**

Dr Chris Nottingham, Glasgow Caledonian University  
*Child protection in Scotland: Learning from history*

Stephen Plunkett, Glasgow Caledonian University  
*Community care and social work in Scotland*

Professor George Irving, Glasgow Caledonian University  
Chris Robinson, Social Work Inspection Agency  
*Discussants*

**11am**  
*Coffee break*

**11.30am**  
**SESSION FIVE: SOCIAL WORK PAST AND PRESENT**

Janice West, Glasgow Caledonian University  
*Heatherbank Museum of Social Work: Potential resources for academic research*

Prof Malcolm Payne, St Christopher’s Hospice  
*Social work: work, profession and discipline*

Roundtable led by Professor John Stewart and George Campbell Gosling

**1pm**  
*Lunch at end of workshop*
Home visiting, childhood and the family in the late eighteenth century

Dr Alysa Levene
Oxford Brookes University

This paper explores ideas and practices about home visiting, the family and the poor home in the later part of the eighteenth century. This period has been almost completely omitted from discussions of social work, but although the term and its specific associations are anachronistic, the later eighteenth century is the period when case work, the connection between poverty and home conditions, and the scientific approach to bettering the state of the poor became popular. In this paper I will use records from several philanthropic and medical charities in London to examine the ways that home visiting were used and portrayed, and particularly how it focused on the deserving poor with young children. Much of the evidence was inevitably produced by the charities themselves and so is useful for indicating how they felt about their aims and outcomes. Naturally they portrayed their efforts as appreciated by the people they visited; certainly it was instrumental in acquainting their officers with the home conditions and state of health of the poor. This was in itself vital for the development of what we would now see as the early social work movement. The evidence suggests that children made a home particularly ‘worthy’ of support, while the young were also viewed as an effective conduit to improving the health and morals of their parents.

Collective responsible and the child protection movement in late Victorian Britain

Stephen Byrne
Oxford Brookes University

The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic reconstruction of the manner in which legislative and popular understandings of cruelty to children were elaborated in Britain. As a result of two major pieces of legislation - passed in 1889 and 1894 - which were sponsored by the child-protection movement, the ability of the British state, and its agents, to intervene in family life was fundamentally reconfigured. While the existence of this new legislative framework for child protection greatly increased the powers available to the child protection societies, working as agents of the state, it did little to solve one of the key problems that associated with crimes against children; namely, that they often occurred within the family home. This paper will suggest that one of the key approaches utilized by the NSPCC and the LSPCC as they sought to combat this problem was to inculcate a sense of collective responsibility for children within the wider community. As such it will examine some of the approaches and methods utilized by the societies in situating themselves both as a protector of children and also of the wider community.
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Social Work:
Revisiting Theological Accounts of the Profession’s Origins

Dr Graham Bowpitt
Nottingham Trent University

This paper reflects on a theme explored in an earlier article (Bowpitt, 1998) in the light of intervening contributions to research and practice. The original paper sought to redress a neglected element in accounts of social work’s British origins: its relationship to nineteenth century Evangelical Christianity. It explored the discreet ‘spirit of social work’ carved out from the general field of philanthropy, and explored the ideological roots of two key components: the use of welfare services to effect social change, and the belief that this could be achieved by rational methods. It attributed the first to an expanded ‘Protestant ethic’ and the second to secular modernity and the belief that social conditions can be subject to human manipulation and control. After reviewing more recent research on the main theme of the original article, this later paper will re-visit the central argument in the light of two main developments in the theory and practice of social work and understandings about its development. The first is the rapid ‘de-colonisation’ of social work that implies that, notwithstanding its Anglo-American origins, it has been deeply enriched by an array of other cultural traditions, each contributing its own story, thereby significantly diluting the ‘Protestant ethic’ account. The second is the revival of interest in the place of faith in social work practice that has begged the question of whether social work is necessarily bound by the assumptions of secular modernity, quite unable to accommodate human spirituality.

‘Social work has ceased to be fashionable’:
Students, social service and social study in England, c. 1900-1920

Dr Georgina Brewis
Institute of Education

Voluntary social service by university students has a long history in England. This paper explores the movement for social service and social study among university students in England in the first decades of the twentieth century. Educationalists and voluntary bodies such as the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and British Institute of Social Service campaigned tirelessly to ensure university students had some contact with the rapidly developing field of social work. The SCM judged visits to a settlement or other social institution to be the ‘minimum contact with social service’ that every student should experience as part of his or her education. ¹ Educationalists in the Edwardian period recognised that they had to work hard to maintain levels of interest among students now ‘social work has ceased to be fashionable’ as one Westfield College tutor noted in 1902.² Although social service at university could be an end in itself, voluntary work and social study by university students also served as preparation for later careers – paid and unpaid – in the broad fields of social and public service.

¹ Social Service in the Christian Unions (London: SCM, 1914), 9; Student Movement Oxford, December 1906, 45.
² Miss Skeel, cited in Hermes, March 1902, 17.
‘A place to train social workers’: the Scottish Settlements, c.1905-1920

Lynn Bruce
University of Glasgow

Looking at the history of the Scottish settlements in the early twentieth century, this paper will examine the issues these organisations and their volunteers faced in trying to adapt to changing expectations of voluntary bodies working with the poor. It will examine the way in which these settlements reacted to the demands and needs of both their workers and their members in order to remain successful voluntary organisations and how one of the ways they did this was to become training centres for professional social workers.

This paper will demonstrate the way in which almost all the Scottish settlements became increasing focused on developing as training centres for workers who wished to have a career in social service and that these developments were often due to the demands of the volunteers themselves. For the settlements, this would involve working with universities and colleges along with other voluntary and municipal bodies in order to establish training courses in social work. Students received a theoretical education at universities and colleges whilst the settlements provided practical experience.

Gatekeepers of Medical Charity:
The Lady Almoner and the pre-NHS hospital system, 1895-1948

George Campbell Gosling
Oxford Brookes University

In the 1940s, on the eve of the introduction of the NHS, a number of writings on the work of the Lady Almoner emphasised that this was social work like any other, only in a hospital setting. Certainly, many who came to the profession wished to focus on providing social support and access to services for patients. However, the profession was pulled in another direction as it was agreed the almoner, with her detailed knowledge of the patient and their personal circumstances, was best placed to set a ‘fair price’ for treatment. This paper will consider the place of the almoner within the pre-NHS hospital system, focusing in particular on the voluntary hospitals. While patient payments became more common during the early-twentieth century, exemptions or subsidised treatment was the norm. It was the responsibility of the almoner, with her interviews and home visits, to administer this effectively means-tested system. Although it is often an overlooked aspect of the profession’s history, determining entitlement and the conditions of admission was a fundamental element of medical social work before the welfare state.
‘I thought you would want to come and see his home...’
Psychiatric Social Work and Child Guidance

Professor John Stewart
Glasgow Caledonian University

Child guidance developed in the wake of the First World War and is an important, although historically neglected, dimension of child health and welfare policy. Its aim was to ensure the child’s healthy mental development, necessary for both a stable adulthood and a stable society. Both funding and training from the United States allowed the first generation of psychiatric social workers to join psychiatrists and psychologists in the ‘classic’ child guidance team. Rather than viewing the child as an individual, they were seen in their total emotional and social context, significantly within the family dynamic. In the words of one American psychiatric social worker, ‘direct treatment can often be carried on most effectively with one or both parents, or with some other adult holding a key position in the family constellation’.

This gave a key role to the psychiatric social worker, who was responsible for visiting the home and observing the physical environment and the family relationships. Although psychiatrists and psychologists were often reluctant to cede professional ground, psychiatric social workers were important figures in the child guidance movement’s early days.

Contrasting responses to unmarried motherhood in two communities in the 1940s: A new sphere for health and welfare workers?

Dr Pamela Dale
University of Exeter

Within local health and welfare services, programmes during World War Two emphasised the need to coordinate services and gave particular urgency to efforts to manage illegitimate births. This included the appointment of new groups of female welfare workers to coordinate existing statutory and voluntary sector provision and led to surveys of unmarried mothers and their children and new efforts to assess and meet their needs. Such work drew on established local services and reflected their existing orientation, not least the emphasis on policing the sexual conduct of women finds many echoes in earlier and later purity and public health campaigns.

This paper uses contrasting case studies of illegitimacy as a priority area of activity in the 1940s. In Halifax an inclusive approach meant illegitimacy had not been singled out for special attention before 1939. Thereafter, developments of services focused on ‘outsiders’ without local support networks, confirming the pre-war assumption that the care/control problems associated with chaotic lives was quite separate from any wider discussion of unmarried motherhood. In Exeter the rescue of fallen women had been a major voluntary sector project since the nineteenth century. Its numerous institutions offering services for unmarried mothers and their children tended to overstate the scale of the problem and thereby encourage draconian measures to control it.

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From Ascertainment to Assessment: 
Developing a role for social workers in local authorities, 1950-1975

Mike Burt  
University of Chester

The role of social workers in local authorities increasingly emphasised the importance of assessment of social need during the period 1950 to 1975. This role was influenced by the differentiation of social work from its earlier connections with health, education and charity provision. It developed in the context of changes to patterns of alternative care, with shorter periods of time living in institutional and foster care, preventive work with children and their families and the development of support which would enable the elderly, handicapped and mentally disordered to ‘live in their own homes’ or in community based accommodation. To facilitate these changes social workers increasingly worked with children, young people and adults in the context of their families and it became necessary to have more detailed information about the circumstances and dynamics of each home.

The role of assessment developed from the earlier work of local authorities in ‘making enquiries’ for the purpose of, for example, ascertaining ‘mental defectives’ and providing reports to juvenile courts. It was influenced by the earlier work of professionally trained social workers who made enquiries of people’s home circumstances and provided social histories but who were primarily based in hospitals rather than local authorities. The development of the social sciences informed the knowledge base of assessment. Assessment of the care needs of children, young people and adults subsequently formed a significant part of the Children Act 1989 and National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Child protection in Scotland: Learning from history

Dr Chris Nottingham  
Glasgow Caledonian University

Child Protection duties are without doubt the most difficult responsibility the social work profession has to assume. At stake is not only the quality and probity of services for children at risk but the future of the profession itself. In this paper I shall initially examine some recent responses to high profile cases and the recommendations which have followed. I shall argue that such responses, mainly involving procedural improvements, although understandable in the highly pressured context in which they take place, do not embody the depth of analysis on which more satisfactory answers could be developed. The core of my argument is that only a nuanced history of the development of children’s services, changing public attitudes, and the politics of professional development, can provide the broad framework of discussion that might yield lasting improvement.

I shall examine a number of dimensions to this issue. These will include the questionable adequacy of new Public Management doctrines in this area, the status of social work as an ‘insecure profession’, and the value of a critical re-examination of the roots of the generic profession. I will suggest that politicians (ultimately in their own interests) should resist the impulse to treat social workers as a convenient scapegoat, and recognise the importance of nurturing the health and welfare professions as an essential arm of modern governance, with their relative autonomy developed as a priceless asset rather than regarded as a threat.
Community care and social work in Scotland

Stephen Plunkett
Glasgow Caledonian University

The re-assessment of the role and scale of public services was a key feature of Conservative Government policy throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The greatest impact in this regard on social work came with the introduction of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, which aimed to promote the growth of a ‘mixed economy’ of care based on increased service provision by the voluntary and private sectors. The role of the local authority social work department was to shift towards the managerial tasks of ‘planning and purchasing’ care services. The 1990 Act was preceded by 4 years of consultation and planning. This paper will examine the stance taken by the Association of Directors of Social Work Scotland (ADSW) throughout that period. In particular, it will explore the role of the Association as part of a wider Scottish political and professional resistance to community care reform. A key theme will be the action taken by the ADSW in formulating an alternative Scottish interpretation of ‘mixed economy’. This was to be based on an increased level of joint working between social work departments, the health service and the voluntary sector at the exclusion of the profit making private sector from the care mix.

The Heatherbank Museum of Social Work: Potential resources for academic research

Janice West
Glasgow Caledonian University

This paper will discuss the history of The Heatherbank Museum of Social Work that is curated by Glasgow Caledonian University. It is thought to be the only museum in Europe to have social work as its subject matter and although it no longer has a physical museum space on campus it continues to be a valuable resource. The author will discuss the creation and early development of this rather eclectic range of resources and will demonstrate more recent developments towards digitisation of some of the Museum’s assets. It is intended to demonstrate that these resources are of potential interest to researchers across a range of academic areas including social policy, health, history and social work itself. The author will outline 2 recent projects funded by the Higher Education Academy to develop the use of the resources by a wider academic audience.

Social work: work, profession and discipline

Dr Malcolm Payne
St Christopher’s Hospice

Recent controversy over the creation and role of a ‘college of social work’ raises questions of social work as an activity, as a paid occupation, as a profession and as a discipline. Similar issues have been raised as social work has changed during the past century. Discourse about social work as a helping profession in British society incorporates a range of alternative conceptions of its identity and role, which in turn generate possibilities for a reframing of its institutional position.
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