



# RE-IMAGINING SOCIAL WORK

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE





# RE-IMAGINING SOCIAL WORK

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To restore the status and share the wisdom of the profession among other professions and the wider society... For social work, this is a great opportunity.

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## Introduction

Every day, staff in social work services are working with people to bring about positive changes in their lives. And now more than ever, social work is joining with colleagues in health, police, education, housing and the independent sector to ensure services are co-ordinated at the point we deliver them to service users.

The Association of Directors of Social Work seeks to promote and encourage these new ways of working, but also recognises that at the core of this change is a need to continue to develop our workforce – both through ongoing professional development and training opportunities for all staff.

The Scottish Executive has developed an Action Plan for Scottish Social Services to ensure enough staff are recruited into the workforce and that they have access to training and support and to ongoing career development.

Together, the ADSW and the Scottish Executive have formed a partnership to 'raise investment in learning and support for all front-line staff in local authorities and the independent sector'. Part of this investment has been devoted to exploring innovative ways of re-energising staff to increase motivation and improve performance through valuing the essence of good social work practice.

The ADSW has recognised the effects on staff of current high vacancy levels, coinciding with increasing demands for change and for new and diverse ways of working, and has taken the lead with an initiative designed by the consultancy New Integrity, in association with The Play Ethic and Poiesis. A partnership has been formed with the Scottish Executive to develop a dynamic, creative and inclusive process, designed to re-energise, re-validate and re-imagine social work practice.

The Re-imagining process has the potential to influence and shape policy implementation in a creative and exciting way, developing ownership and innovation from those at the front line of service delivery.



The Re-imagining Workbook can be used by individuals, groups and organisations, and has the potential to:

- improve sustainability
- increase creativity
- improve capacity to deliver (for busy, hard-pressed social work teams)
- develop high performance people and organisations
- improve service outcomes
- integrate all the elements identified through the Re-imagining process

Re-imagining Social Work can enable social workers and social work organisations to take control through being positive about their work and their role in these changing times, and in so doing increases the potential for social work to make a difference.

Duncan Macaulay  
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## Executive summary

- Social work is once more in the media spotlight, challenged by social legislators and commentators everywhere to prove its efficacy and viability. This turbulence gives Re-Imagining Social Work (RISW) particular focus and impetus. Though it is not a direct response to the current situation, the Re-imagining process was shaped by an understanding of the long-term challenges for the profession. Through ongoing workshops and training and development initiatives, RISW encourages clear strategies for action based on engaging social workers themselves, with a re-imagined sense of their tasks and 'social mission'.
- One of the key elements in the dilemmas facing social work is its wider cultural context and the public perception of its place and purpose in society. RISW explores the possibility of a brave re-positioning of social work, moving it from the margins into the heart of society, prompting a new awareness and a greater public engagement with the stark challenges – and opportunities – usually faced by social work alone.
- While the media presents the dilemmas of social work as dualistic – failure or success, saving or condemning, intervening or neglecting – the reality is complex. Workers as well as managers, policy-makers as well as the public, move in a see-saw fashion between two apparently locked-in mindsets. One is driven by anxiety and the need for control (what we call 'being trapped in the Fear Loop'), the other by empathy and the need for understanding (the 'trap of the Love Loop'). Yet RISW shows that the different values of both approaches need to be held in a creative tension and allowed to complement each other. Once workers master this dualism, we can begin to create narratives of development for social work: high-order benchmarks of success and achievement which can be measured on a continuum of progress and professional development, rather than a tightrope of success and failure.



- The responsibility for effective social work does not lie solely with more efficient staff nor more efficient management, but in both engaging with each other and - self-consciously - with the world of public policy and culture.
- RISW uses four distinct but inter-related arenas (or 'quadrants') of exploration: the individual social worker's capacities, the practice and structure of social work, the local and general culture within which it operates, and the nature and execution of policy. In making the quadrants explicit in any social work situation, RISW shows how they can be consciously integrated with each other, changing and responding within a richer vision of the whole, suggesting innovative lines of communication and shared understanding.
- The responsibilities that social workers exercise are directly related to what one might call their *response-abilities* – ie. their capacity to respond to different and changing circumstances.
- Not enough consideration has been given to developing the capacity of staff to carry out

their tasks. Training which primarily takes the form of instruction and guidance is necessary, but not enough in itself. Social workers need to develop their inner resources of consciousness – the ability to be aware, to hear, to respond, even when the stakes are high and the environment is hostile. The 'confidence question' for social work – who can take responsibility for a client, adult or child? – is partly answered by developing 'response-abilities', where analysis and intuition complement, rather than oppose, each other.

- The inner language of social work does not yet hold currency in the outside world. Words like 'intuition' and 'gut-feeling' form a crucial part of professional social workers' vocabulary, but are often rejected as having no place in deliberations on particular cases. By becoming more aware of the validity of the language of consciousness, social workers can articulate and contextualise their more intuitive feelings in a way that allows them to have a legitimate role in social work practice.
- The complexity of social work and its joint work with other care sectors and professions ('who is responsible for what and when') currently looks like a jigsaw puzzle in which different pieces can get lost at different times, rarely making a full and coherent picture. RISW proposes a different metaphor – that of a 'dynamic, integrated network', in which all pieces have a sense of the whole, and where workers are able to comprehend the full picture of their particular activities at all times. Moving from a *work ethic* to a *play ethic* can help to deliver this network culture, where 'play' means constant and vibrant engagement at all levels.



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## What is re-imagining?



by Pat Kane and Indra Adnan, *Directors, New Integrity*

In most dictionary definitions, 'imagination' has two distinct meanings. The first is purely technical: the forming of an image in the mind that isn't directly sensed or perceived. The second is much more ethical: as the American Heritage dictionary puts it, imagination is 'the ability to confront and deal with reality by using the creative power of the mind'.<sup>1</sup>

Most social workers would certainly accept the second definition as a description of what they do, every working day. This is the reality of individuals, families, ethnicities and communities, in crisis or under duress, to whom the social worker has a duty to respond.

Yet that response can hardly be routine or conventional: every situation is unique, and it is the social worker's task to tailor solutions to that uniqueness. So the 'creative power of the mind' is a vital element in the process.

But remember the first meaning of the word: forming an image in the head that's not directly connected to reality. One would have to say that there are quite a few of those images around about social work, both in the heads of workers and in the wider culture – from the idealised Mother Teresa archetype all the way through to the demonised family wrecker.

Our primary task here is to revitalise this 'creative imagination' of the social worker. These are the powers of the mind (and of the heart!) which everyone in the profession wants to exercise to their fullest capacity.

Why? Because they want to bring meaning, coherence and aspiration to the lives of those who express a need for care and assistance. That's the job they started, and that's the job they want to continue to do.

The models and exercises collected here are intended both to remind social workers of their imaginative power and to enhance and develop that power with some resources that may be new to the profession. They are drawn from an eclectic range of places: business and the arts, consciousness studies, biology and semiotics.

Our consulting background is not in social work. Yet our experience of this profession (gained through a range of organised and informal encounters over the last twelve months) has been rich and compelling, challenging many of our ideas and practices.

It's been exciting to find that social work is a vital crucible for so many urgent issues around organisation, human potential, emotional intelligence, the relationship between care and creativity. We hope that social workers can use this material to discover a new relevance to the wider world – which, in our view, is increasingly moving towards the core of their deepest-held values. As the title of our consultancy suggests, a re-imagined profession means one with a 'new integrity' – one which connects to the world with a confidence and energy, driven and centred by a profound understanding of its 'wholeness' and coherence.

And perhaps a social work profession thus revitalized will be able to transform that limited public 'imagination' we spoke of earlier. Not by some shiny new 'image' that shoves out the old one, but by the public actions of those who creatively confront and deal with the realities of social hardship, deprivation and need: changing attitudes through articulacy and confidence. We think that Re-Imagining Social Work can help to begin that necessary process.

## Introducing the Core Ideas



RISW is built on four core ideas: Consciousness, Fear and Love Loops, The Play Ethic and The Four Quadrants. Together they chart a journey of human agency – that is to say, how we act effectively in the world. The RISW logo goes some way to graphically represent this journey: starting in the inner realm of individual **Consciousness**, we move out beyond the boundaries of the self with the **Fear and Love Loops**. The movement into society continues with the **Play Ethic**, eventually heading towards a 'big map' of the world at large with the **Four Quadrants**.

While each of these core ideas is a theory and practice complete in itself, linking them together allows us to construct a powerful account of what it is to be a human being, interacting with the world at large. To 'integrate' all four of these ideas – that is to find some greater pattern or 'whole' within which they could relate to each other – is to take some significant steps towards developing a new integrity for social work in the 21C.

When something goes wrong in social work, we are apt to try and isolate a bad judgement, a false action or maybe an ineffective system to pin the blame on. But underlying any action - whether it be an autonomous, or an automatic response to a situation – lies the consciousness of the person who takes that action. Questions about the consciousness - the emotional, intellectual and spiritual awareness - of the social worker, and their resulting capacity to carry out agreed practice are rarely faced in retrospective judgements of events. Yet they are crucial to any understanding of why failure occurs. For this reason **Consciousness** is the starting point of our journey.

## Introducing the Core Ideas



The **Fear and Love Loops** move us away from the inner realm towards a contemplation of knowledge beyond the self. They describe two dominant ways that we choose to know the world – through control (the Fear Loop), and through participation (the Love Loop). Recognising their co-existence gives us more freedom to move between these different ways of knowing – and it allows *both of them* to be resources for creative activity.

**The Play Ethic** extends that theatre of creative activity much further. Through the '7 Rhetorics of Play' - which together explode the myth of play as a purely trivial activity - we are able to apply our ideas of consciousness and relationship to seven different ways of engaging with the world. The result gives a whole new perspective on what we regard as valuable, effective action, whether as individuals or within organisations – a perspective which can be readily embraced by social work.

If these three concepts of **Consciousness, Fear and Love Loops** and the **Play Ethic** are applied to social work, the resulting exploration may release a torrent of possibilities for action of all kinds. Some of them may suggest ways forward for individuals, some for activity, others for policy and still others for the broader arena of culture.

The **Four Quadrants** offers a way to put all these ideas on one complex map which reflects both the inner and outer realms of individuals and groups as well as their possibilities for growth and development. By looking at this map in its entirety, one can grasp not only the complexity of the present and the recent past of social work, but also the great potential of the social work of tomorrow.

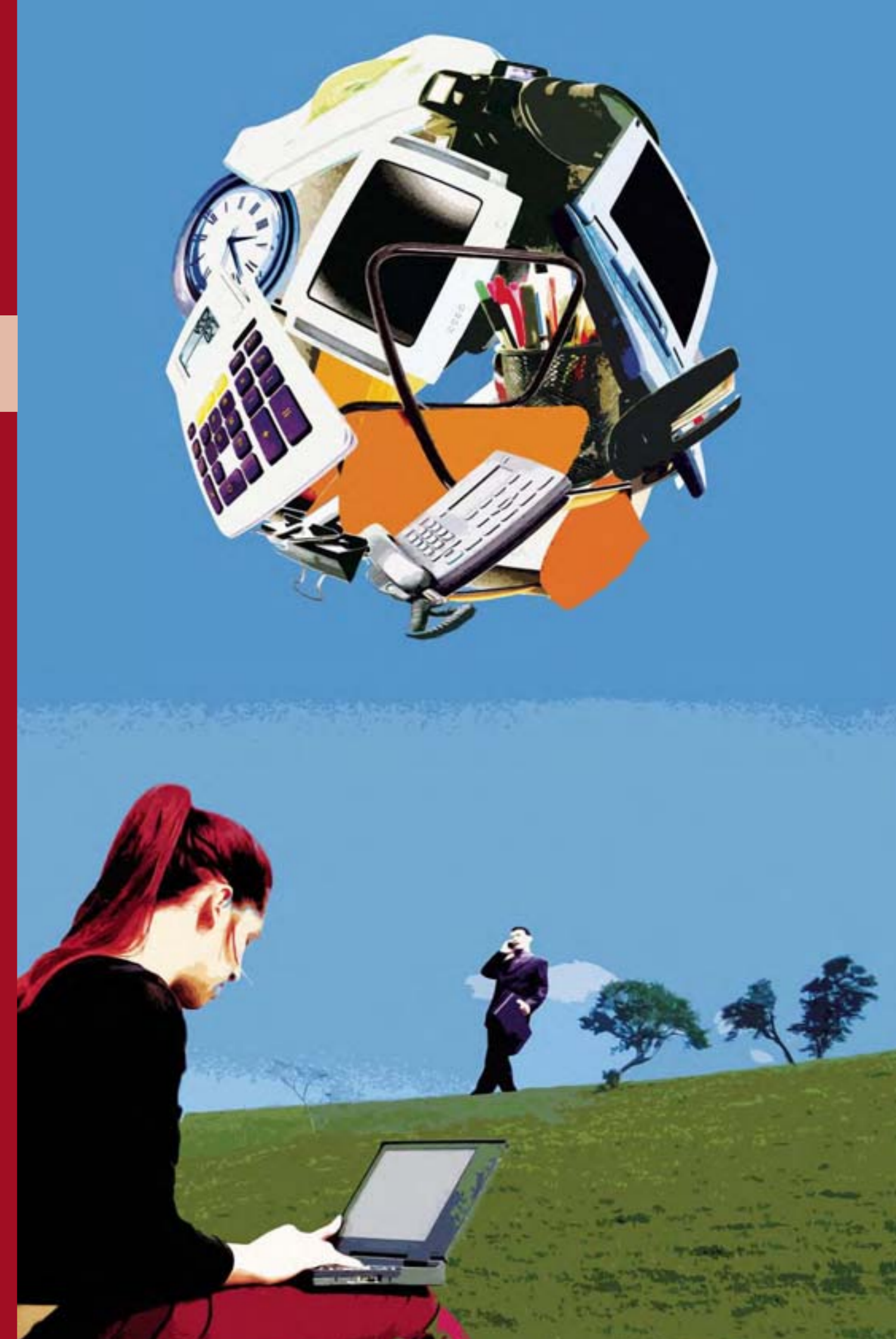




Albert Einstein once said:

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

How do we expand the mental frameworks that constrain our imaginations? What kind of new thinking could give way to happier, more creative responses?



it's a ball of confusion...

The extreme experiences that now occur on a global scale – yet which impact directly on our local lives – present us with little choice. Somehow, we must respond to this dynamic world we have created, by greatly increasing our capacity to understand, feel, process and create value.

## Core ideas Consciousness

**Desperate measures to keep staff  
Who would want  
to be a social  
worker today?**

**Bureaucracy holds up the  
pace of change**

**Crisis in the profession deepens**

**Social workers  
were 'too intrusive'**

**Social workers  
were 'too  
understanding'**

**Information  
overload,  
wisdom deficit**



### What is consciousness?

*The voice inside our head that contemplates our own existence and makes us who we are (Dan Stern, psychologist)*

*A function of specific physical relations, developed through evolution (Daniel Dennett, philosopher)*

*Not just a feeling, but knowing we have that feeling (Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist)*

Spend ten minutes on the internet and you will quickly see that consciousness is a vast topic, hotly debated. Questions stretch from 'is consciousness all there is?' 2 at one extreme, through to 'does consciousness exist at all?' 3 What's more, it's highly topical – new books are coming out daily. While some scientists are hotly pursuing the possibility of making machines conscious 4, others, like Antonio Damasio, are burrowing deep into the brain to find the neurological evidence and patterns which might substantiate their ideas 5.

For the purposes of this introduction to Consciousness as a core idea for the Re-imagining process, let's take the Oxford English Dictionary definition as a base line:

*Consciousness: the totality of the impressions, thoughts and feelings which make up a person's conscious (inwardly sensible and aware) being.*

### A modern concern

There are a number of reasons why consciousness has moved to the centre stage of public concern. Medical practitioners see the relationship between consciousness and physicality as key to future developments in health. Educationalists are increasingly aware of key components of



consciousness – emotional, intellectual and spiritual intelligence – as being the building blocks of capability in children and adults. 6

But there are social and political reasons, too. In a number of arenas – the economy, technology, science – we have the ability to realise our dreams of continuous progress. Yet these material achievements often outstrip our mental and physical ability to manage the resulting experiences. Sometimes this manifests itself as a perplexing overload of information; at other times it's something more prosaic, like too many transactions (witness a global money market out of control). The huge levels of stimulation in our lives are often not managed by our limited consciousnesses and things happen that appear to have no origin or any logical path to follow.

The events of September 11, 2001 probably illustrate this more than any other. Here, writer Caroline Knapp tries to explain the assault on her consciousness that occurred with 9/11, making her painfully aware of the limitations of her ability to understand and process events. But it also made her feel vulnerable to anyone who had a clear sense of where to go next:

*Our culture thrives on black-and-white narratives, clearly defined emotions, easy endings, and so this thrust into complexity exhausts (us). Too many feelings competing for head space, no happy ending in sight, no tacit belief that our minuscule attention spans will protect us this time, and little solace from our ordinary opiates – movies and sports and computer solitaire. The people I talk to feel an odd, almost adolescent yearning for leadership, craving and mistrusting it in the same breath. 7*

Some writers argue for a less complex life: we should return to clear, shared values and supportive structures; communities, families, jobs for life. However, the extreme experiences that now occur on a global scale – yet which impact directly on our local lives – present us with little choice. Somehow, we must respond to this dynamic world we have created, by greatly increasing our capacity to understand, feel, process and create value. This requires a development of our consciousness.

Can consciousness develop pro-actively? There are at least three commonly accepted ways of triggering changes in consciousness. Firstly, consciousness can be **raised**. Through the best efforts of 'culture' in all its many forms – advertising, media, the arts, propaganda – the way we think, feel and respond to stimuli can be affected. But is the *shaping* of emotions the same as expanding the capacity of our consciousness?

Secondly, we are quite sure that consciousness **grows** and matures with age, although in which ways and at what pace is still not well understood. Age itself is no guarantee of a well-developed consciousness.

Thirdly, there is more evidence that consciousness **evolves**. It adapts and changes through the generations, in order to ensure the survival of the human organism. 8 Personal experiences – a death or a birth, a journey, love in one of its many forms, a sexual encounter – somehow make us more aware of what it is to be both human and ourselves. We are soon able to develop a perspective on those feelings and on our emotional life that signifies an increase in consciousness – a '**being more**'. This is vital for the increase in empathy with others, but it is also vital for our own vision of what is possible for ourselves.

Youth is always associated with a time of pro-active expansion of consciousness – though that expansion is by no means limited by youth! Travel, drugs, technological experimentation, cultural exploration – all are fuelled by a desire to 'be more' in some way.

Group activities – from spiritual retreats to book clubs – are increasingly popular as a way to increase awareness of the self and others. Not only are individuals being deliberately, self-consciously honest and open, but they are also subjecting themselves to change by the group on a number of levels: emotional and spiritual, sometimes physical. And as that change happens, they are monitoring it and measuring its impact.

#### **Mediation**

Reality tv (from *Big Brother* to *I'm A Celebrity*) can be seen as pro-active development of consciousness. TV viewers are becoming ever more willing to 'watch' people just being people.

Such a development of consciousness allows us to better understand and manage our selves, our emotions and needs, as well as our impact on our environment. More importantly, it allows us to gain a certain mastery over our reactions to others: when we can see ourselves react, we are more likely to be able to engage our wisdom before acting



They measure themselves up against the all-too-human behaviour of contestants and imagine what they would do, how they would be, in similar circumstances. Celebrity culture has a similar effect. Even the simplest actions start to be 'mediated' – self-consciously observed and processed – by the individual. Young girls watching themselves walk down the street. Men hearing themselves say things to their partners, as if they were being recorded.

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#### Narratives – and their link with Re-imagining

Such mediation means *more* in terms of consciousness, not less. More input, more imagination, more 'seeing ourselves as others see us'.

Some areas of the news media have also become aware of the power of their own 'mediation'. This has helped journalists and the public towards an understanding of the *narratives* that govern the media's editorial decisions. Whereas once the news was driven entirely by a proclaimed adherence to **truth and objectivity**, today it is much more likely to be aware of the political and social agendas it embraces. It can see itself reacting and positioning itself in response to events, in ways it simply could not before.<sup>9</sup>

Individuals as well as groups have equally influential narratives underpinning their decisions. Becoming aware of these narratives has the effect of freeing us from their 'unconscious' control over our thinking. Unearthing these narratives and freeing up our thinking makes it possible for us to begin the Re-imagining process.

#### New resources for action

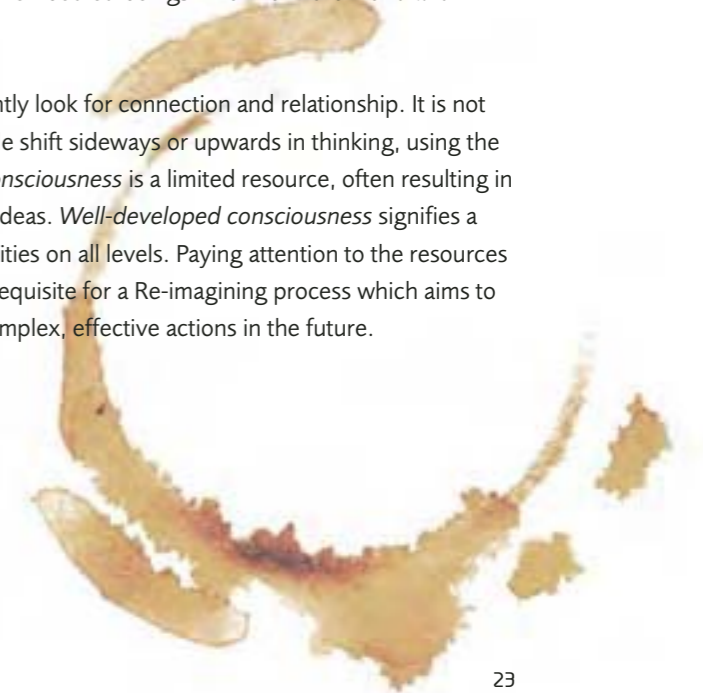
Is wanting to know yourself in a more complex way – revealing to yourself the narratives that govern you, identifying your essential drives – just a more intense navel gazing? It certainly can be, if all the new information you gather only fuels further introspection.

But there are other possibilities available to us.

In his essay on 'The Breakdown of Consciousness', Paige Arthur<sup>10</sup> explores the reasons why we have not yet been able to create conscious machines:

*What the human mind does so differently from any computer is relate itself to a world outside. Computers don't do that. They don't have to deal with ordering the infinite possibilities of everyday lived experience; instead they only order what is in their limited domain...Real intelligence only comes from embodied beings who live in the world and operate in concrete situations.*<sup>11</sup>

Human beings, on the other hand, constantly look for connection and relationship. It is not enough to think of Re-imagining as a simple shift sideways or upwards in thinking, using the same basic resources. *Underdeveloped consciousness* is a limited resource, often resulting in poor communication and badly-executed ideas. *Well-developed consciousness* signifies a much greater capacity for complex capabilities on all levels. Paying attention to the resources of consciousness, therefore, is a vital pre-requisite for a Re-imagining process which aims to equip an individual or a group for more complex, effective actions in the future.



We can take each loop as representing one dominant way that the care professional sees the world, or any problem or situation they might face. The loops dramatise well that precarious balance between objectivity and subjectivity, between policy and intuition, which the properly 'ethical' professional is expected to master.

## Core ideas

### The fear and love loops



All workers in the caring professions – from teachers to medics to social workers – face a shared dilemma. You could call it the problem of distance and closeness (or, to be philosophical about it, objectivity and subjectivity). When should I empathise with this person, and when should I criticise them? At what point do I follow the rule book, and at what point do I go with my feelings and experience?

The care professional's dilemma is acute. Do I measure my client's behaviour against some norm or aspiration, and intervene accordingly? Or do I enter into my client's world-view, try to understand their own explanation for their predicament, and shape a unique solution to their situation?

Most professionals know their code of ethics well enough, involving values like 'respect for human dignity', 'service to humanity', 'integrity', 'competence', etc.<sup>12</sup> But being able to realise those values is another matter. To achieve the level of wisdom and balance that such an ethical code requires is a tall order.

Yet there are solutions. One thing we can try out is a different mental model of how emotions and knowledge interact in any situation. Our implicit attitude, largely unshaken after four centuries of rationalism, is that the subjective and the objective are adversaries. One approach to the world, one way of knowing the world, must ultimately triumph over the other.

But if we see subjectivity and objectivity as interdependent – one supplementing and shaping the other – then we can begin to escape from this dilemma.

#### The Fear and Love Loops

Developed by the International Futures Forum (IFF) in St. Andrews ([www.internationalfuturesforum.com](http://www.internationalfuturesforum.com)), the 'Fear and Love Loops' is a model that begins to address this thorny problem.

The model is rooted in the work of the biologist Brian Goodwin, an IFF member and lecturer at Schumacher College at Dartington in Devon. Goodwin's research is all about showing how science can be practised more than one way. We usually presume science is a tool for breaking reality down into its nuts and bolts, in order to see how an organism or an environment works. But Brian suggests we should also turn our attention to bigger patterns and structures.<sup>13</sup>

In his view, scientists should not presume that they are somehow separate and distant from what they are observing, particularly when the objects are living, thinking, feeling human beings.<sup>14</sup>

The Fear and Love Loops is Brian's attempt to put some emotional and ethical content into these two different ways of seeing the world scientifically. But a moment's reflection shows how useful they are as a mapping of the caring professional's dilemmas.

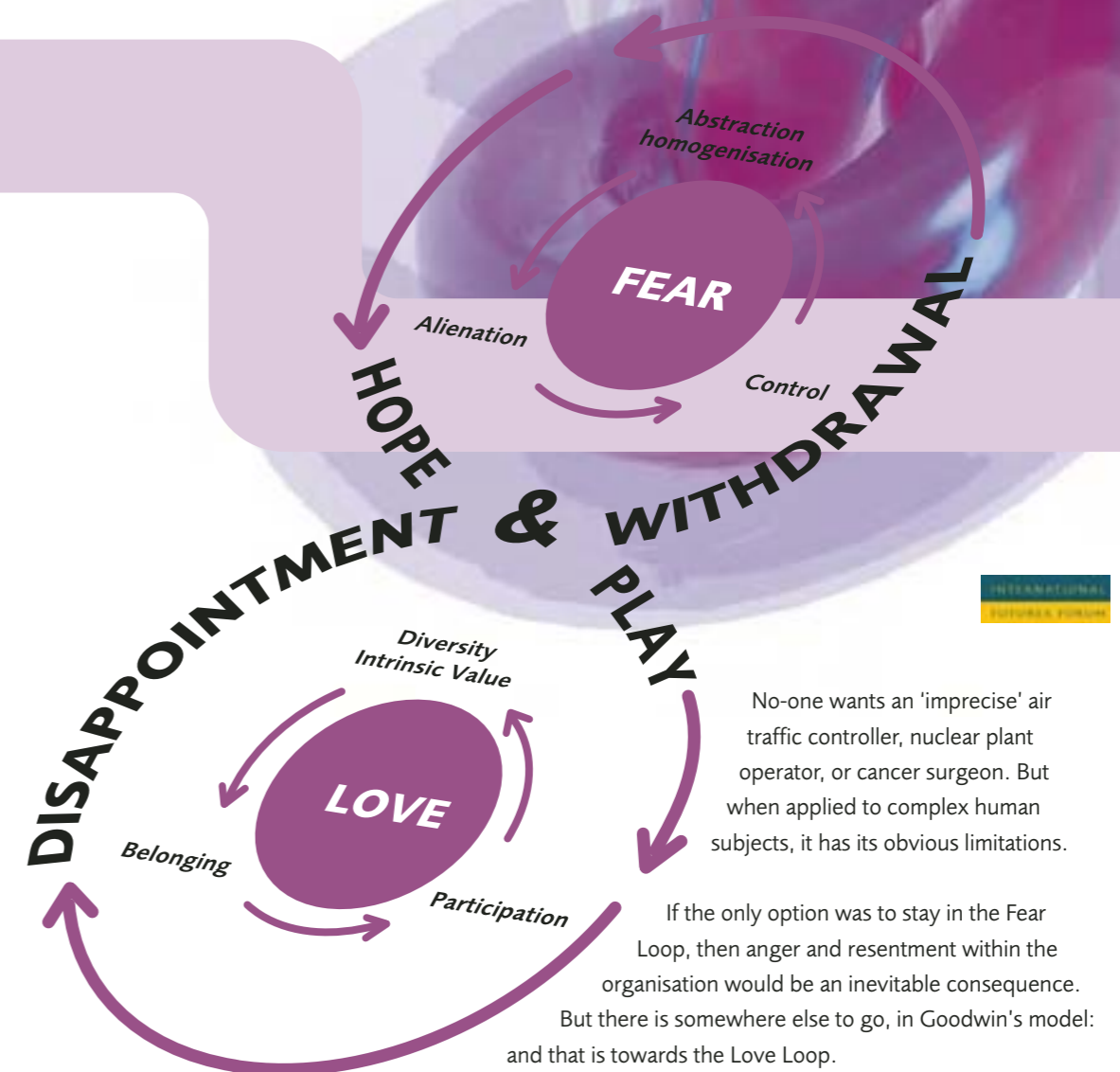
We can take each loop as representing one dominant way that the care professional sees the world, or any problem or situation they might face. The loops dramatise well that precarious balance between objectivity and subjectivity, between policy and intuition.

**The Fear Loop**

This is the traditional scientific way of knowing the world. Reality is *controlled*, framed by *abstractions* of theory or policy.<sup>15</sup> Most people who work in organisations will recognise this way of knowing the world. It's the framework within which policy and strategy is usually made. It's also the mentality which makes sure these policies and strategies are adhered to throughout an organisation.

Why does Goodwin call it the 'Fear' Loop? Because this is often the dominant emotion involved. Defending standards and procedures can be motivated by the fear of failure, dismissal or even litigation. Fear is the prompt to take the necessary steps for survival at all levels.

But when the issue of survival is not so pressing, then a 'fear' mentality becomes counter-productive. The need for control, audit and measurement becomes more important than the goal of service. *Being trapped in the fear loop is often about mistaking the means for the ends.*



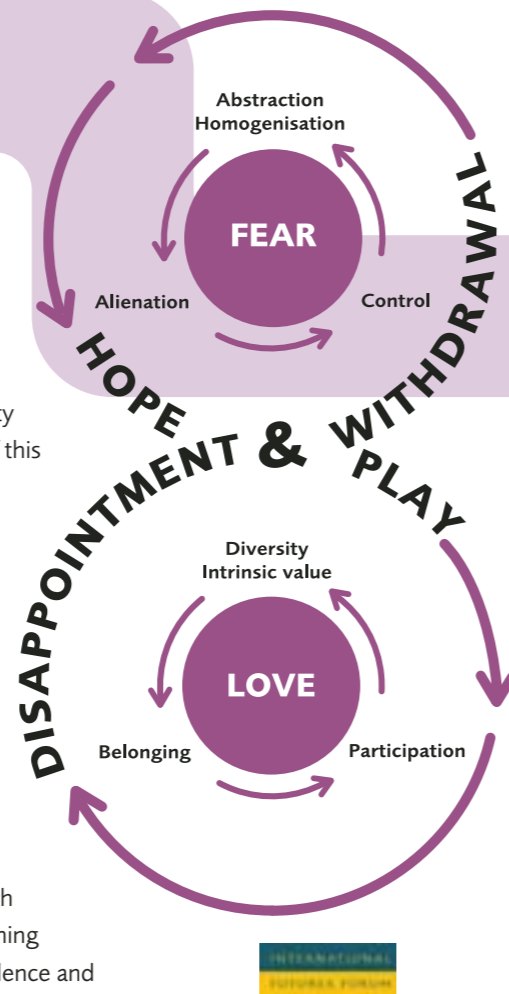
No-one wants an 'imprecise' air traffic controller, nuclear plant operator, or cancer surgeon. But when applied to complex human subjects, it has its obvious limitations.

If the only option was to stay in the Fear Loop, then anger and resentment within the organisation would be an inevitable consequence. But there is somewhere else to go, in Goodwin's model: and that is towards the Love Loop.

**The Love Loop**

In this realm, we know the world not by controlling it, but by *participating in it*. We presume we are dealing with human subjects, not human objects, who will have their own definitions of reality that have to be taken into account. So rather than turn them into abstractions, we *explore* their humanity. And to do that we have to acknowledge human *diversity*.

Knowing the world this way assumes that people have an intrinsic value, rather than their worth depending on how far they fit (or don't fit) a label, category or title. There is also a presumption that understanding people in a situation involves a sense of belonging with them, a willingness to accept the terms of their world-view and picture of reality.



It is clear that this kind of knowing-through-participation has always been an important part of being a care professional. 'Service to humanity, integrity and competence' are empty words, without the fuel of this kind of embrace of others.

But it is as important to point out the limitations of the Love Loop. We can get lost in it. At all levels of an organisation, expectations of the behaviour of others (and ourselves) can be set too high, with inevitable shortfalls. An over-strong identification with the specific situations of workers (or their predicaments with clients) can lead to misreading signs and indicators of incompetence and stress.

Professionals could presume a sense of 'belonging' with and 'intrinsic value' in clients, rather than truly establishing that belonging or demonstrating that value. The confidence and willingness to intervene on behalf of a person at risk (whether child or adult) could be eroded in an environment that was too subjectively oriented. *Being trapped in the Love Loop can also be about mistaking the ends for the means.*

**The loops working together**

The most interesting thing about the loops is that they are dynamically linked. They are a mapping of the inevitable flips that humans make between two different kinds of knowledge – objective and subjective, measuring and interpreting, disciplining and empathising. The model itself suggests some possible routes between the two realms of understanding, knowing by control and knowing by participation.

To break out of a control/Fear Loop, it's important to have a sense of *hope* and *play*. 'Hope' refers to the feeling that all options are not closed down, or doomed to failure by the record of the past. And 'play' represents a spirit of experiment that's willing to break with precedent. This is where the passion and idealism of the care professional has a crucial role.

Yet when knowing-by-participation fails, our emotions are often ones of *disappointment* and *withdrawal*. Rather than become lost and despairing, we know we have our mode of knowing-by-control to fall back on. A journey into research or an examination of precedent – to literally 'think again' – will give us the chance to build up our strength for the next leap of trust and participation. The key insight is that both loops, both modes of knowing, are necessary.

**Throwing the Bird**

The systems thinker Jake Chapman symbolises the difference between knowing-by-control, and knowing-by-participation, by comparing what happens when we throw a stone and then a bird.<sup>16</sup> With the stone, we can measure all the factors (weight, force, trajectory) and predict with reasonable accuracy where the stone will fall. This is the dream of objective management – a quantitative science, everything measurable and predictable.

But when we throw a bird, it is at liberty to choose to go where it pleases. As Chapman helpfully suggests, you might solve the problem by tying the bird's wings together, attaching it to a stone, and then throwing... But at the very least, that actively suppresses the energies and capabilities of the bird itself (and would make it incredibly angry and rebellious, if it ever managed to release itself).

This is the mistake of attempting to know by control – it squeezes the life and vitality out of the living, complex entities controlled (or not).<sup>17</sup> Policy heads and change leaders would do well to think of their target sectors as living birds, rather than inert stones.



One possible answer to all these issues is to abandon – just for a moment – the grip that the word 'work' has on our imaginations. What other term could we use to describe our aspirations to live creatively and productively with others?

## Core ideas The Play Ethic



*Imagine a park, or a backyard, on a summer's day. There's a tangle of young kids, in the early primary years, and they're engrossed. Some brightly coloured bits of plastic are spinning furiously on a patch of concrete: they're taking turns to launch them from their strings, whooping as they spin and spark off each other. A parent sits reading a paper, looking over occasionally, happily.*

*Suddenly it all goes wrong: tears, stomping off, sullenness. It seems that one of them either has a bigger spinner, or is better at spinning it, than the others. A series of faces crowd round the parent: they cry 'not fair', 'she's too good', 'I don't want to play anymore'...*

*The parent has been enjoying his paper, so he suggests that they form into two teams. They should decide what team the big expert goes in, what team should face him. A moment's reflection – and they're noisily forming their new rules. The game continues, and they're even more engrossed than before... Until the next rule-challenging action comes, and there needs to be another adjudication. Only this time, one of the older boys works out what to do next. The parent smiles and withdraws...*

We all recognise these dynamics – the dynamics of play. We also know that some real-life lessons are being learned here – both by the kids and by the adults involved in their play.

- We learn about winning and losing, the importance of concentration and full engagement, taking risks and recovering from falls.
- We learn the value of boundaries – that there are rules in all our games. But we also learn how to make a virtue of those rules: how to get them to enhance our skills, how to test them to their limits, rather than be confined by them. (The boy who learns the football trick that a corner gained is better than an impossible goal attempted...)



- We learn to value our skills – the thing we've brought to the game that no-one else has. And the importance of practice, practice, practice.
- Most important, we learn how to take our knocks, and get back into the game.

The spectacle of play in children is a spectacle of resilience and potential: our early humanity seems to be driven by an unquenchable energy to get back into the fray with others, to keep trying to master new situations, to apply ourselves to skills and techniques that will come in useful later on. Why do we lose this vitality in later life? In an era where our lives seem to be in constant upheaval and change, why have we lost touch with an aspect of our human nature – our elemental playfulness – which might help us to survive and even thrive in such times?

#### Playing with work

We live in times where disillusionment with the traditional values of the work ethic – that a job is always ultimately worth doing, no matter how unfulfilling – is rife.<sup>18</sup> The indicators are all around us.

Despite the best efforts of successive governments, the rate of absenteeism and sickness leave taken by employees in the UK is enormous.<sup>19</sup> In popular culture, attitudes towards work are explicitly sceptical. Popular satires like BBC2's 'The Office' subject the rites and rituals of workplace culture to merciless derision. News stories report almost daily a rise in the number of narcotics and 'euphorics' taken across the social spectrum – from alcohol to ecstasy – particularly among younger generations.<sup>20</sup>

In the 90s, faced with these often dispiriting figures, employers and organisations started to address workers' disillusionment through initiatives like 'work-life balance'.<sup>21</sup>

Yet it is the issue of whether workplaces sufficiently answer our demands for 'responsibility' and 'aspiration' that challenges the previous statistics and trends. One way of addressing the issue would be to consider developing a better 'rhythm' between the different responsibilities and aspirations that occupy our waking hours. We could, for example, forge an idea of 'meaningful action' that spans both our domestic and working lives, our leisures and our labours, and find a new vocabulary to express our desire to be creative, productive and valuable.

If we abandon – just for a moment – the grip that the word 'work' has on our imaginations, what other term could we use to describe our aspirations to live creatively and productively with others?

#### Consider a shift in thinking – from worker to player?

'Play' might not seem like the most obvious or relevant term here. The Puritan legacy has made it synonymous with triviality, diversion, self-indulgence, even immorality. 'The soul's play-day is the devil's work-day', thundered the great 18th century Puritan reformers.

Yet the actual root of the word 'play' comes from the Indo-European word 'plege', meaning 'to engage'. This indicates that play is about action, strategy and purpose, as much as it is about experiment and freedom.<sup>22</sup> If we allow ourselves to think in this way, the real meaning of 'play' – both the word and the behaviour – captures at least as much of what it is that 21st century people do with their lives, (and want to do with their lives), as 'work' does.

Before we can start to use play to 're-imagine' our productive lives, we need to develop a much richer understanding of the meaning of play.

#### The Seven Rhetorics of Play

The American educationalist Brian Sutton-Smith has outlined a radical new vision of the different forms and traditions of play – what he calls 'rhetorics'.<sup>23</sup> Within them, we can see that the idea of being a 'player' becomes less like a trivial pursuit, and more like a multi-faceted way of being not simply human, but *fully human*.

The Seven Rhetorics are:

1. **Individual play:** free expression, self-realisation, leisure and recreation – 'work-hard, play-hard'.
2. **Imaginative play:** mental creativity in arts and science – the 'play of the mind'.
3. **Healthy play:** child and adult development in education and skills – 'playing to keep myself sharp and energetic'.
4. **Power play:** the contests of politics, sport, law, markets, our propensity to play competitive games of status – 'playing to win'.
5. **Social play:** confirming our collective identity through ritual and carnival – parties, away-days, celebrations, ceremonies, 'playing together'.
6. **Cosmic play:** being ready for the unexpected – the 'play' of possibilities in life, the embrace of risk and chance.
7. **Trivial play:** play in the traditional sense – a sense of fun, subversion, humour, silliness, 'playing the fool'.

Sutton-Smith's view is that the very diversity of these forms of play indicates a truer picture of humanity. These play rhetorics are all forms of human action in, and reaction to, the world – overlapping and blurring what we usually mean by terms like 'work', 'productivity', 'community', 'learning' and 'enterprise'. The rhetorics allow us to see that we can literally 'play' with the boundaries of these terms. We are able to 're-imagine' what we traditionally do with these accepted categories.





The application of this approach can be illustrated through the above model of 'The Player'

*This image shows an individual who is at the centre of their productive and creative activities (the similarity to the sun or a star is not coincidental!). Yet to make this shift, the individual has realised that much of what we do to enrich, engage and push forward our lives can be seen as various forms of play.*

*If we consider all the different ways in which we have the potential to play – as the player-model shows above – we come to a new understanding of our daily round of activities. We find that much of what is sustaining, cohesive and progressive in our lives comes from a combination of these various forms of play. All of which are easily available to us if we decide to make this 'shift' of our imagination.*

The difference this shift in our thinking makes can be demonstrated through a 'Play Audit'.

**The 'Play Audit'**

We can do a 'play audit' on any aspect of our professional or work activities, identifying which of these various rhetorics or forms of play is dominant, passive or non-existent.

By doing so, we can substantively map the 'playfulness' in our jobs – how much of our jobs express our sense of freedom, fulfilment and creativity. We can also identify to what extent, as workers or professionals, we are strong or weak in all the other forms of play.

In order to be productive and creative, our environment – work-place or otherwise – should have all of these forms of play present in it. Any environment that is missing one or more of these play forms can be seen as demonstrating a much more traditional, authority-and-order-obsessed organisational culture – *an environment which is tilting backwards towards a 'workplace'*.

Any working environment that seeks to encompass the major play forms can be seen as encouraging internal talents within the organisation, within the overall purpose and function of the enterprise – *an environment which is tilting forward towards a 'playplace'*.

A play audit can therefore encourage us to consider and develop innovative ways of producing, collaborating, resourcing and networking, inside and outside our organisations.

**A 'Play-Audit' example**

A public sector organisation involved in giving direct social services to clients decides to undergo a 'play audit' on its internal operations. The workforce are asked to provide examples illustrating each type of play that they perceive to be operating in their workplace. A score rating (1 lowest, 10 highest) is also requested, assessing the extent to which each rhetoric of play figures in the workplace.

In our analysis of the questionnaires, we discover that the workforce culture scores *highly* on:  
**Trivial play** – there is a great (if dark) sense of humour in the organisation.  
**Healthy play** – people are constantly taking courses, and making meetings, that dwell on the 'development' of staff.  
**Social play** – there is a strong, if slightly embattled and defensive, 'team identity' (social play).

Yet on the other play forms, there is a *much less positive* evaluation:  
**Imaginative Play** – there is no framework for eliciting new ideas from general staff, not even a suggestion box, and no-one seems willing to suggest rule-challenging innovations or come up with new schemes.



**Power Play** – there is a sense of impotence and futility vis-à-vis policy-makers, of diktats being imposed from on high. There are no open forums in which the staff can safely challenge workplace structures and rules. The real ‘players’ in this sector are elsewhere – not in this building/area.

**Individual Play** – there is a preponderance of procedures and rules, and a general distrust of those who seem like ‘free spirits’, too keen to question and challenge long-accepted traditions.

It is likely that many staff will have entered the profession full of enthusiasm about what they want to contribute to social work. Yet their ideals and their energy will have been worn down by a sense of individual impotence within the organisation. As a result, their focus will have shifted from the customers and clients they originally wanted to serve, to the alternative focus of the only potential for progress they can see open to them – ‘climbing the career ladder’.

As for **Cosmic Play**, this organisation hardly has a consciousness of these factors at all. The lack of a sense of readiness to ‘expect the unexpected’ means that the workplace or profession is ultimately vulnerable to large and sudden changes in the wider environment – new governments, new policies, new social problems or demands, etc.

Presented with this particular audit, this workforce would then be invited to consider how they might expand their ‘play forms’ within the organisation and thus enrich their collective capacity as professionals, by considering the following:

- How can we create space and establish processes that encourage out-of-the-box and imaginative thinking?
- Can we make such innovation part of our social play – as a means of confirming our sense of who we are, or as part of our identity?

- How can we discover a better way of engaging with power inside and outside our organisation? Can we examine ways in which we might become ‘players’ in arenas of policy and strategy that were not open to us previously?
- What is the attitude towards change and risk in the organisation? Given the inevitability that wider forces – political, historical – will ‘play’ with the boundaries of job and profession, how can these ‘forces’ become a resource rather than a threat?

#### The Benefits of a Play Audit

This hypothetical account of a typical play audit helps us to see that there could be many benefits in experiencing these shifts in thinking, structure and working practice:

- generating a new collective image of the workplace as innovative and interested in developing its workforce as its most valuable resource;
- producing a more subtle appreciation of its different strengths and forces; having workers come to work with the best of their ‘non-work’ identities (quirky and individual); flattening out structures of authority and promoting a new culture of mutual respect.

#### Re-imagining Work – through Imagining a Play Ethic

Will we begin to establish a new and grand narrative for our productive and creative lives – a ‘Play Ethic’ to challenge our old ‘Work Ethic’? This might be too far off, or even undesirable.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps it would be more in the spirit of play to allow the composition of ‘play ethics’ in the plural – letting people arrange these rhetorics with their own emphases and stresses, adapting them for use in their own contexts.

In our consultancy work, we have noted many examples of how effective the shift from worker to player can be:

- With **teachers and educationalists** in Melbourne, Australia, we used a play audit to highlight the limitations of an education paradigm based on the industrial model of the self – a personality devoted to routine, duty, deferment, purely numerical and textual literacy. The values of play became the elements of a model for teaching innovation and enterprise in primary and secondary schools.<sup>25</sup>
- With **civil servants in the Cabinet Office** in London, we illustrated how a ‘society of players’ might present interesting challenges to the way that government fashions policies. Play perspective gives policy-makers some kind of sensibility for what they can govern, what they should govern and what they should not attempt to govern.<sup>26</sup>
- With **advertisers and computer games makers** in Dundee and London, we have explored the ‘ethics of play’ as a possible new framework to guide the content element of computer games. Could we begin to respect the different forms of play that it encapsulates and see it as a new kind of literacy and citizenship? This shaped an ad campaign for a new games console.<sup>27</sup>

#### Play and Re-imagining Social Work

If you want to see how the Play Ethic works as a specific technique in an interactive Re-imagining session, turn to p.78.

It's not just about the employee's ability to do the job or the culture of this particular organization or the demands of yet another policy directive from on high. The problem arises from all these factors manifesting simultaneously.

## Core ideas The four quadrants



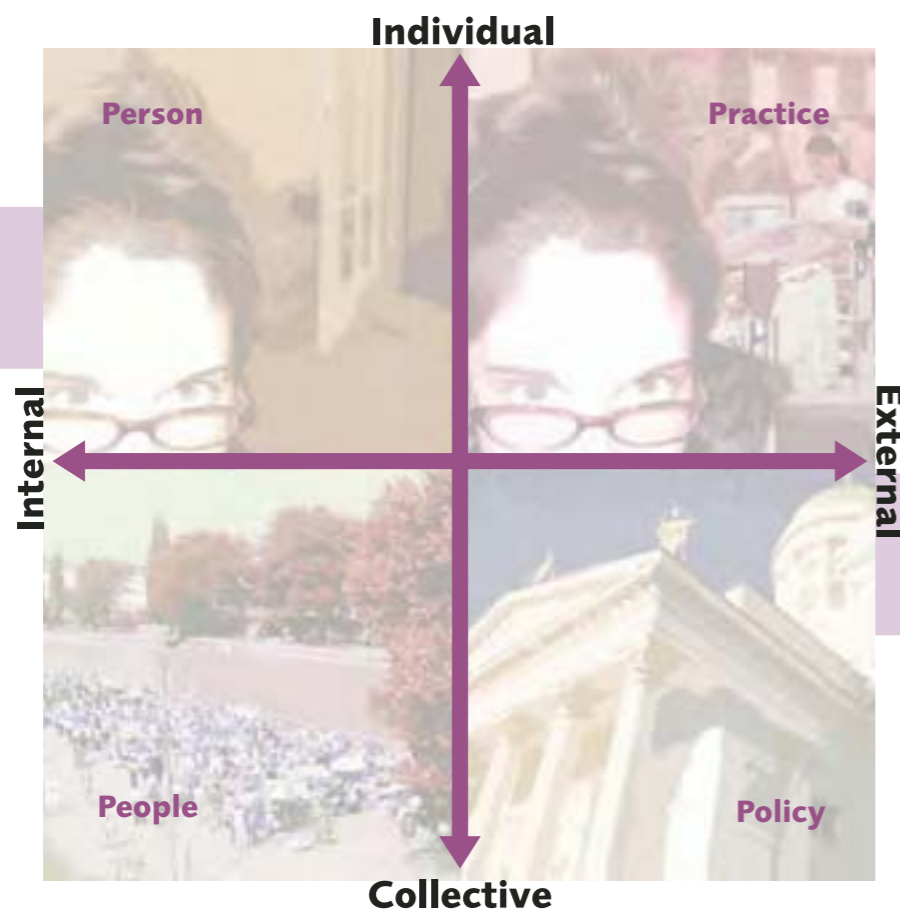
Why do some problems in a job or organisation seem intractable?

A manager looks at the employee's work practice, sees a flaw and gently tries to put it right. But the employee makes the same mistake a week later. Working on it together, they quickly come up against the time and financial constraints placed upon them. Just as they find a workable compromise, a new policy directive comes in that overrides all their attempts at change and presents a new model of practice.

A sense of helplessness is induced in both manager and employee. They never quite got to the bottom of the original problem and now they won't have a chance to address it at all. The following week, the employee makes the same mistake again.

What this story makes clear is that sometimes the problem should be put into a much bigger framework. It's not just about the employee's ability to do the job or the culture of this particular organisation, or the demands of yet another policy change from on high. The problem arises from all these factors interacting simultaneously.

Albert Einstein once said: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them". Perhaps these problems seem intractable because the minds that experience the problem are the same ones that are trying to solve it. How do we expand the mental frameworks that constrain our imaginations? What kind of new thinking could give way to happier, more creative responses?



A 'civilisational' Four Quadrant map showing developmental lines. Adapted from Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything*, Gateway 2002

**Four Quadrants 4 All**

Philosopher Ken Wilber posits that there are four dimensions to the experience of any phenomenon. Because they collectively make up a full experience of the 'whole', he calls them quadrants:

- Person Quadrant:** How it exists in the internal life of the individual.
- Practice Quadrant:** How it is reflected in his/her external life and actions.
- People Quadrant:** What common values or culture supports it (internal collective).
- Policy Quadrant:** What rules or political systems order it (external collective).

By placing any situation in the context of the Four Quadrants, by giving equal weight and significance to each dimension of the phenomenon, we can begin to see its full complexity.

To illustrate: one person with a contracted job fulfils certain tasks each day (Practice Q). That person has a certain capacity at this moment in time, which is shaped by a number of definable elements – age, training, experience – but also by an innumerable amount of undefinable elements – emotional, intellectual and spiritual quotients (Person Q). The person and the job exist within a culture that they may not have directly chosen or shaped but certainly take part in (People Q). Their freedom of movement is framed by the policies and politics that govern their society (Policy Q).

When you look at a person, practice or institution in the light of the Four Quadrants, they begin to take on a much more complex hue. Instead of looking at a problem entirely from the point of view of the tasks (Practice Q), one can look at it from the perspective of:

- the capacity of the individuals being asked to fulfil the task, not just for skills but for emotional and processing capability (Person Q)
- the underlying value structure – or culture – that is making the issue a problem at all (People Q)
- the policies that are guiding or directing this area of operation (Policy Q)
- from all four perspectives at once, seeing a relationship between them

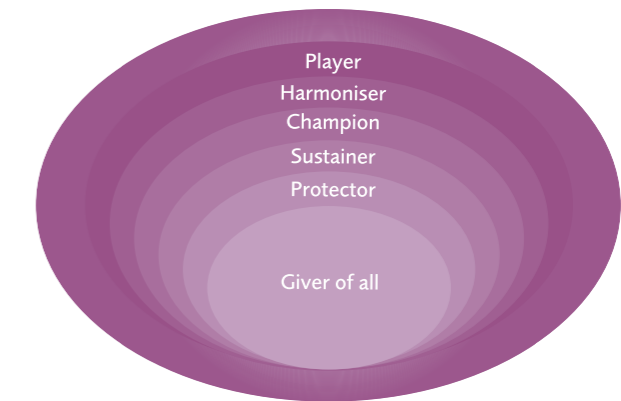
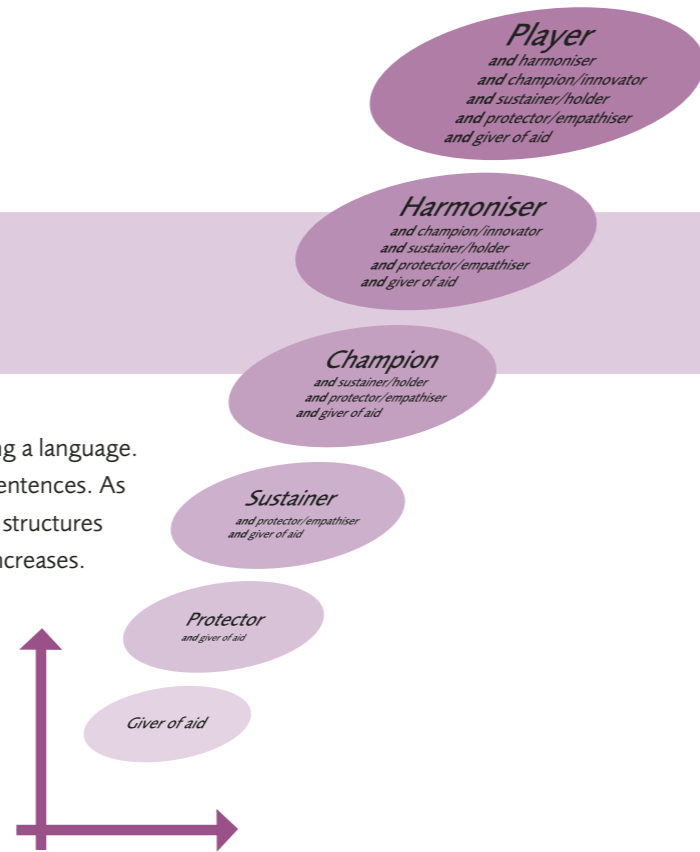
Instead of one limited path to a possible resolution (ie, the worker simply must do what s/he has been contracted to do), a number of different paths open up.

**Lines of development**

Within each one of the quadrants, there will always be indications that there are possibilities for development in the following ways:

- Person Q:** Personal development at all levels
- Practice Q:** An increase or broadening of tasks as responsibility increases
- People Q:** Evolution of either society or institution, or both
- Policy Q:** New policy informed by progress in the other three quadrants

The nature of this development is *holarchic* as opposed to *hierarchic*, measuring growth of capacity rather than achievements of merit. In a *holarchy*, earlier stages of development are regarded as the essential building blocks of future progress, rather than downgraded as inferior or having less value (as in a hierarchy).



A good example might be the pattern of learning a language. You begin with a basic vocabulary and simple sentences. As you progress, your ability to use more complex structures and introduce subtleties to your conversation increases. By the time you are fluent, you are still using the basics, but you are using them in ever more complex ways.

In social work, holarchy implies that some of the very elementary skills – helping elderly service users to carry out daily tasks for example – never lose their validity in the whole picture of social work competencies. Sitting and listening to the vulnerable members of society may come early on in the developmental narrative of a social worker, which could eventually take one into large and complex levels of responsibility. But it should never lose its value as a core practice.

The diagram above, drawn in a series of sessions with social workers in South Lanarkshire, shows a holarchy of development in the Practice quadrant. It shows how we might describe a social worker's function, from simple aid giver all the way up to a "player" who is capable of creating complex networks of aid around a service user.

The stages in between show the development in a social worker's ability to respond ever more profoundly to a service user's needs – from helper, to protector, to sustainer. It then demonstrates an ability to relate to an ever broader context within which the service user exists – first being able to champion their cause, then to harmonise the forces operating around them. However, at no time should the developed social worker lose touch with the simple skills learnt along the journey – occasionally they are more appropriate than the sophisticated skills gained later.

The relevance of these holarchies, or lines of development, is to encourage an open-minded analysis of the subject or situation at hand. While the quadrants allow us to seek a better clarity about the current realities of a situation, the developmental lines also allow us the possibility that the reality will change.

All the factors of the quadrants will play their part in the resolution of problems. Such a complex assessment will help set guidelines for employment in the future.

It is important that communities of workers have the opportunity to identify their own lines of development. It is their direct experience of the job that will reveal the possibilities for strengths and weaknesses in carrying out tasks.

**A good relationship**

What might a good relationship between the Four Quadrants and their development lines be? First and foremost, simply recognising the *co-existence* of these four different manifestations of reality is an important development. For an individual to recognise that s/he has an active inner life as well as active outer life, both of which are shaping minute-by-minute decisions, is no small step. For that same individual to begin to recognise the effect of the local and national culture on his or her thinking is another step. And finally, to recognise that the political, scientific and economic rules s/he operates within are also the boundaries of his or her daily actions, is a third moment of awakening.

Some, but not all, come to realise that the relationship between the quadrants is fully reciprocal: not only is their thinking shaped by all four quadrants, but their thinking can shape all four quadrants in turn. This means having an influence – if not full control – over their daily tasks, the culture they are part of, the policies and narratives they live within, and (most importantly perhaps) their own inner life of emotions and health.

A further possibility is to seek a correlation – not only between the quadrants but also between the development lines within each quadrant. The correlated map would line up:

- stages of consciousness development *with*
- appropriate levels of practice *with*
- supportive culture *with*
- policies which reflect and can be easily carried out by people of that capacity.

This is not achieved easily when a map is showing only small developments in the upper quadrants, as such changes will not correlate with the more momentous shifts that tend to

happen in either value (People) or Policy. However, when it can be achieved - by keeping development in all Four Quadrants on the same scale - it offers a useful analysis of present and future potential. (See p40 for Ken Wilber's fully correlated map of civilisational development from the past into the future and p105 for a more specific application to social work).

So, whereas individuals once saw themselves as separate personalities with clear intentions, free to succeed or fail, they now begin to see themselves as part of a much more complex web of life, where different perspectives on reality have to be acknowledged.

The virtue of the Four Quadrant framework is that we can see how these different aspects of reality might mutually influence each other in ways that are precise and can be articulated. Thus when we encounter intractable and messy problems in our workplaces or communities, we don't presume that one viewpoint – or person – has all the answers, or is entirely to blame. We can begin to map these problems across the divides of the Four Quadrants, thus devolving and sharing their solution across a whole spectrum of viewpoints and experiences. Individuals can then feel part of a wider, collective system of problem solving, and can act to improve matters. Instead of simply worrying about their own 'blame' or 'innocence'.

#### From individual to institution

Let's take this model of relationship beyond an individual's complex life to that of a company, institution or even nation. Each of these entities displays its own specific relationship between the Four Quadrants. Yet that relationship is often characterised by the overall dominance of one quadrant in the general world-view (most commonly the fourth, involved with political policy and business strategy).

The ideal relationship between the Four Quadrants is *dynamic*. If conscious actors in any realm of life were fully aware of the quadrant they were acting in; if they were then fully aware of the ways that the other three quadrants conditioned and limited those actions; and beyond that, if they consciously sought links of interdependence between all four – then they would always act with a much fuller awareness of the absolute reality of any situation.

With this four-dimensional awareness in place, each of the quadrants can become a *potential starting point for change*. Workers' internal capacities could influence work practice; cultural indicators could prompt new policy, policy could cause whole new vistas to open up for workers; successful practice could have a lasting effect on culture.

#### The benefits

Is there any hope at all for correlating the quadrants? Will we ever find a good fit between, for example, policy, practice, individual capacity and culture? Occasionally it will come easily, but more often it will exist only as potential.



For example: a multi-national company with its head office in New York embarks on a new corporate direction. The head office undertakes months of scenario planning, eventually coming up with a bright new direction, which it then happily hands down to managers worldwide. But what are the chances of successful implementation?

If the CEO and his immediate colleagues are conscious of the Four Quadrant approach, they will offer this new plan as only a first step towards change. In a dynamic relationship with the whole company, individual departments will float the policies until they find a natural fit with their own ideas of where they currently are, in terms of capacity, working practices, and how they might develop. This might mean that the policy looks different in different parts of the company, or that some departments might take longer to address the policy.

Reciprocity is an important element of a full Four Quadrant approach, so departments should also have the opportunity for meaningful feedback that may end up affecting the original plan. It seems like a lengthy process, but the chances of eventual success are much higher.

The Four Quadrant approach is primarily an exercise in the mapping of our consciousness of reality. Using this framework, we can gather together many more factors than usual, in order to illuminate a defined situation or problem. In the Process sections (p86-95), we will show more precisely why and how this framework is relevant to the predicaments and possibilities of social work.

But it's crucial to remember that we shouldn't expect any particular outcomes in advance from a Four Quadrant mapping – it's only a particular stage in a process of Re-imagining. And who knows precisely what we'll find at the end? This quote from designer Bruce Mau is a useful maxim, to help us through this journey:

*Process is more important than outcome.  
When outcome drives the process,  
we will only ever go where we've already been.  
If process drives the outcome,  
we may not know where we're going,  
but we will know we want to be there...*

## Method and process

# Exploring and playing



### Introduction

Imagination is about using the power of our minds to help us make a change or transformation in our world. Yet the collective imagination of a particular profession can easily become narrowed and predictable.



Social workers in particular could be forgiven for allowing their imaginations to become defensive and limited. The mental reaction to their responsibilities could easily be 'shutdown!' No more inputs, other than those which might reduce a heavy case-load. Yet this kind of defensive stress must surely take its toll on social workers' daily performance. If their 'response-abilities' are blunted and stunted, they will find it difficult to live up to their 'responsibilities'.



These initial exercises in the Re-imagining Process are about revivifying social workers' 'response-abilities' through Exploring and Playing. That is, using a variety of games, stories, exercises and aesthetic experiences to explore and play with our consciousness.



### From playing around to using tools

One of the direct skills that arises from exploring and playing with consciousness is a growing ability to observe your own thinking. This is a vital skill to have in order to remain buoyant amidst the relentless challenges of social work. If you are able to identify the elements of your own thinking, you can begin a process of self-renewal at any and every moment. Let's tell a general story that shows how the 'ability to observe your own thinking' might empower a particular social worker.

### Sabeeha's Story

Sabeeha is unhappy at work. Her colleagues are puzzled: although she is quite new and very young, she has made an impression quickly. She now has her own desk and computer and has begun training as a bereavement counsellor. From an objective view point, all is going well for Sabeeha – she is on the ladder and rising.





If she was able to read her life like a novel, however, it would reveal this:

1. When she entered the profession, she had great ideas about changing the community. She saw herself as a potential heroine, moving from house to house, helping and saving. Bob Geldof and Mother Theresa were her role models from school onwards. Time has revealed to her that life – and more importantly, its institutional structure – is not that simple. Understanding that she needs to rise high in the profession to be able to make her mark, she begins to do everything by the book, and is rewarded with early promotion. She doesn't feel the motivation she felt before.
2. Sabeeha's family moved from India a generation earlier. She is still determined by the hard work and achievement ethos of her immigrant background. In her home they are very competitive – her brother is always one step ahead, but she often beats him at chess. Right now she is earning more than him. She finds the co-operative, non-competitive culture in her profession difficult to understand and she worries that her hard work and naked ambition will make her unpopular.
3. She began a bereavement counselling course but she can't make head or tail of it. She is young and has not lost anyone yet – even her great grandparents are still alive. She puts on the act and follows the guidelines of her training, but feels out of her depth most of the time.

This information about Sabeeha is mostly hidden from both her own and others' view. Yet once this information about her **cultural narratives (1)**, her level of **consciousness (2)** and her **personal stories (3)** is available to her, it begins to ameliorate the problem. She becomes more aware of her own governing narratives – the stories that have shaped how she thinks and reacts – as well as her own fears and motivating desires. This helps Sabeeha to manage her emotions better. It also enables her to observe her own thinking, freeing her to seek support and encouragement when necessary.

To be able to construct a narrative like this about the totality of your life – as worker, family member, creative person – is possible when one is skilled in the appropriate 'consciousness tools'. Yet workers and professionals need to access an even more elemental level of consciousness, before they can embrace these kinds of techniques.

#### Responsibility and response-ability

The underlying attitude that enables a flexible consciousness is, the spirit of Play. (See Core Ideas: The Play Ethic for a full explanation). Play implies openness, full engagement, freedom from judgement and a great sense of possibility. Exercises such as those in the following sessions work best if you can find a good change of scenery for the players or an unusual, beautiful 'play space' such as an art gallery – anywhere where the familiar structures of authority and workplace culture do not hold sway.

As much as possible, the games should be playful, experimental and hence fearless. As with any good game, there will always be rules and roles to fill. Nevertheless, the participants should always feel that the only authority in the room lies within themselves. Participants will begin to learn how to observe their own thinking, as a trigger for new perspectives and hence behaviour. However, because of the unscientific nature of our enquiry, we should also take our findings lightly – the information we uncover is general and broad.

Players will also become much more able to recognise strength, vulnerabilities and patterns

of behaviour in others. Increasing confidence in this process will nurture the ability to hear and respond to others. Playing and Exploring can develop response-ability, and thus sustain and strengthen responsibility.

The Person quadrant (denoting the interior life of an individual) is often excluded when enquiries into the possible causes of strength and weakness in the performance of any workers are undertaken. Instead, the major emphasis is put on the efficiency and efficacy of the work Practice (Practice Q). Sometimes the workplace culture – its inherent values and the shared characteristics of the workers (People Q) – are questioned. But rarely do we travel into the interior self (Person Q). Equally rarely do front-line workers have the freedom to examine the Policy quadrant.

However, the consciousness-literate worker can accommodate both his/her own position and the intentions of the policy-makers in a way that encourages a creative response to the shared dilemmas of social work.

The three workshops we suggest you use to develop this consciousness analysis are:

- **Cultural narratives:** Our imaginations are not just personal affairs, but collective as well. We need to examine this public imagination about social work, and begin not just to compare it to the reality of the profession, but our own internalised imagination about social work. This doesn't just mean looking at news media, but fictional narratives from film, television, literature and music. Can we learn something from how artists, writers and image-makers have grappled with the conundrums of social work, from the perspective of their consciousnesses?
- **Consciousness games:** We may feel we know ourselves well but do we know what desires and fears lurk in the inner reaches of our minds? In addition, do we need to consider whether or not our friends and colleagues share our view? When we speak, is what we intended to say the same as what is being heard? Similarly, we may feel we are fully conscious of our needs and wants. But did we always feel that way, or have time and other factors shaped and altered our ability to assess ourselves accurately? What are the parameters of our current imagination, and how can we reach new limits?
- **Storytelling:** Sometimes we are drawn to a story about someone, and it moves us for no apparent reason. Similarly, true stories about ourselves – from our childhood, or drawn from our everyday lives – find a way to engage us much more than simple facts or statistics. Story-telling is a way to unearth our deep drives. Stories – both listening and telling – help us to identify what matters most to us and what causes us to fear and to care.

The detail of how to arrange the workshops is covered in the 'How' sections in the workbook. The information uncovered in the workshops can be recorded, or stored as data, for use in the follow-on sessions.



## Exploring and playing Cultural narratives — why?

### The context

Social workers have had to tolerate representations in the media that fall far short of standards of accuracy and fair representation. Over the past twenty years, a range of serious and high-profile child protection cases have generated two strongly-held but diametrically opposed views of social work.

Whilst the public and media focus is often highly contentious and dramatic, social work has often been caught in a vicious circle of opinions. The extremes of this are captured in the phrase 'you're damned if you do intervene, and you're damned if you don't'.

These high-profile cases have significant and often critical outcomes for social work, particularly in child protection. Social workers acknowledge that the public's concern regarding those acting on their behalf rightly demands media attention. However, there is clear survey evidence that the public at large appreciates just how difficult, but also how necessary, social work is.<sup>30</sup> So the 'vicious circle' has its counterbalance. 'Sure, it's a vital job – but I certainly couldn't do it.'

Is this the eternal fate of social work in the public imagination – a profession only ever visible when it's negatively defending itself against allegations and crises? Or when it's positively proclaiming its virtues, anxiously aware of its poor media image? This is an exhausting and potentially paralysing situation, with no clear resolution in sight.

### The power of the arts

Could there be some advantage in listening to some different 'stories' about social work – ones that are not caught up in the mutual attack-and-defend strategies that go on between social work organisations and news media? As with the health service and the police force, social work is often dramatised in television and movies, literature and the visual arts, even music. Is there some insight to be gleaned from the way that filmmakers and tv producers, writers and artists have 'imagined' social work?

Type 'social work' into the 'plots' archive of the Internet Movie Data Base, and there are 67 films – cinema and tv, Western and non-Western, stretching from 1936 to the present day – which feature social workers as leading or supporting characters.<sup>31</sup> The characters range from the most embarrassing stereotypes (social workers falling in love with Elvis, or malevolently disrupting families in Muppet movies) to the most inspiring and visionary (Jennifer Lopez as a futuristic social worker in *The Cell*, or John Travolta defending the poor against mobsters in *Chains of Gold*). In the UK, our soap operas regularly feature social workers (or other care professionals) within their dramas, adopting a range of roles.<sup>32</sup>

Artists and creators use social work as a way to illuminate characters and themes, and to evoke certain kinds of experience and attitude. They are not tied down by any journalistic standards of 'objectivity' or 'investigation'.

Arts and culture provide a neutral and disinterested space for all those who have an interest in how social work is understood and talked about in the wider world. Workers can begin to consider the implicit 'scripts' that underlie much day-to-day social work practice. These are a mixture of the rule-bound requirements of the job and the emotional and verbal crutches often used to get through these requirements briskly and efficiently – but not always effectively.

By observing these scripts in cultural narratives, social workers can recognise their own habitual and formulaised ways of behaving in their job and either change those scripts for the better, or find a renewed motivation to perform some of the existing scripts.

The visual symbolism of movies and television is often a strong indication of the deep currents of emotion in the public imagination about a profession or institution. Why is it, for example, that social workers are always dressed a certain way when they appear in British soap operas –

Is this the eternal fate of social work in the public imagination – a profession only ever visible when it's negatively defending itself against allegations and crises?... This is an exhausting and potentially paralysing situation.

consistently in cardigans and dull jackets, almost a uniform of bureaucratic mediocrity? Or why is it that social workers in movies are often cast as sinister, shadowy, malevolent figures?

We can use these movie scenarios as a departure point, to play with the possibility of a different narrative or image. This experience introduces the general notion, essential to the Re-imagining process, that habitual frameworks and mental models can be changed.

For example: in the Disney animated movie *Lilo and Stitch*, the social worker who keeps an eye on Lilo is modelled on a character from a Quentin Tarantino movie. Cobra Bubbles wears a black suit and tie, black shades, using baroquely threatening language. Until the end, the character is a typically coercive social worker.

But could we imagine Cobra as a different character? A laid-back dude? An officious, dowdy, bloodless functionary? Or perhaps even an understanding, perceptive, attractive person? An exercise with participants could be to re-run the narrative through with a different character in the social worker role. We might end up with Lilo living a more or less stable life. The sense that narratives can change if the capacities and talents of the social worker change, would be directly understood.

#### Conclusion

Going through this kind of cultural analysis can prompt a new and revitalized sense of ownership of the profession of social work. Workers feel that their profession has been vigorously narrated and imagined by others than themselves or their media observers. Awareness of cultural narratives is the first component of the vital and necessary 'expansion of consciousness' implied by Re-imagining. Only this expanded consciousness can ensure that the development of the skills, capacities and potentials of social workers – our main aim in RISW – is sustainable and irreversible.

## Exploring and playing Cultural narratives – how?



There's a very simple and obvious reason why Cultural Narratives is the first element in this Exploring and Playing stage: people like to relax and watch movies and television in the morning! But more than that, using representative clips from these media are an effective way of bringing excitement and topicality to the beginning of a session, as well as a sense of glamour and performance.



#### Advance preparation and resources

- The material you will need for this session can be taken from popular culture of any kind – films, tv plays or soaps, theatre scripts, librettos, music. You will need a way of recording selected clips from the media you have chosen. Downloading material onto a cd, video tape or directly onto your computer is relatively easy with the minimum of technical know-how.



- In the age of the internet and the video-recorder, it is easy to obtain many of the relevant movies. DVDs are easiest, as they have a facility for bookmarking relevant clips. Television is more difficult, but do ask your group for any favourite social work characters well in advance, so that you can tape them yourself.



- What is also useful is a transcript of each clip's dialogue (the script spoken by the actors) to more deeply inform the participants' viewing of the clips.

- You can conduct the same kinds of exercise with social work narratives and images as they appear in fiction, drama, poetry and music. (If you have any favourite references for these artforms, we'd appreciate if you could visit our website <http://www.reimagining-social-work.org>), and use the bulletin board there to let us know, so that we can build up an archive of resources for this kind of exercise. There will also be a list of media resources on the website).



### Planning and running the session

- Select clips that represent some of the extremes and some of the midpoints of how social work is represented in the media. This can be customised according to the particular focus. For example, is this a general Re-Imagining session, or one directed towards a specific care or professional specialism?
- Another way to use clips is to compare and contrast, by selecting three or four incidents from a particular specialism (care of the elderly, child protection, inter-cultural community relations, etc), and showing how these can be presented in different ways.
- Another way to use clips is to explore the generalised *dualisms* about social work (the way the media and the public tend to see social workers characterised by opposite qualities – for example, too engaged as compared with too distant, or marginal radicals versus mainstream citizens).
- Another way to use clips is to look at how social work culture can be identified and mapped across widely different forms and genres of tv, shows, movies etc. *Secrets and Lies* (1996), *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993), and *Bell Diamond* (1987) all show interview segments with clients which can be used to critique effective interview techniques.33

### Data from the session

The point of this session is to help the participants to become aware of how their own personal narratives of social work are shaped by the cultural narratives that they receive from the media, focusing on narratives in film, television and the arts.

The data collected – usually a list of comments and phrases recorded on a whiteboard or notice board – has to display, as pithily as possible, the participants' personal responses to the material presented. Humorous, exasperated, analytical, disdainful, strongly identifying – none should be discounted.

An example of the kinds of responses is given below, from the Dundee RISW sessions.

*Secrets and Lies* (2001)

Directed by Mike Leigh, starring Timothy Spall, Marianne Jean-Baptiste

### Plot Summary

Successful black woman (Hortense) traces her birth mother to a lower-class white woman, who denies it; emotions run high as everyone's secrets are exposed.

### Social work interest

*Secrets and Lies* has a central 15-minute scene, where Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste) goes through her first encounter with a social worker (Lesley Manville), in her search for her birth mother. They meet at a busy, shabby social work centre: the worker is clearly in a hurry, loaded down with case notes. Though her verbal 'script' is impeccable, her physical performance is that of barely-suppressed impatience. There is also a strong sense of officiousness.

Lesley Manville's performance brilliantly shows a woman who is shifting through the gears of a 'caring' persona rather too obviously. At the end of the scene, as the social worker rushes off to another case, Hortense catches up with her to clarify an issue in her adoption papers. The social worker defends the accuracy of the papers with not a little hardness, 'I can assure you they're absolutely accurate'.

### Comments from the group:

'We're concerned at this depiction'

'It's too real'

'She has no resources, bad manner, not prepared'

'She sees client as an inconvenience'

'Reminds me of my mother in hospital, trying to get to see a social worker for her situation – couldn't get one, she was just thrown a leaflet'

'People don't know where the social worker comes from'

'Some operations have to be on a shoe string'

'It's easy to judge badly'

'There is a gap here between her training, and her internalising'

'She's experienced but blasé'

'There's no personal connection'

'She's time-pressured'

'That's an example of non-professional professionalism!'

Store this data for use later in the process.

## Exploring and playing Consciousness games — why?



Consciousness games are aimed at developing the ability to *observe* one's own thinking and feeling. Naturally, there are degrees of ability to do this, from the simple registering of emotions and their effects, all the way through to the spiritual mastery of the mind offered by martial arts. For our purposes, observing one's own mind means:

- to be aware of how one reacts to stimuli and to events
- to be able to distinguish between broadly subjective and objective assessments of an event or a person
- to begin to be aware of the *governing narratives* shaping one's thinking
- to become alert to the temporary nature of our thinking (that we can change our minds, both over time and under specific circumstances)
- to be able to judge the strength or weakness of one's current conviction (to be able to say 'I'm sure' or 'I am ambivalent')



There are a number of clear applications for this:

### 1. Usable Intuition

Effective social work often leans heavily on a kind of knowledge that is hard to articulate.<sup>34</sup> The social worker often calls it a 'hunch' or 'intuition' and is inclined to trust this feeling and act upon it.<sup>35</sup> However, they rarely have the time or means to deconstruct it – that is, to look at all the personal, practical, cultural and historical factors which go into the 'occurrence' of an intuition.

Hunches cannot stand up in court or when tested for their ability to be explained – they are too insubstantial and can't rely on proof to become persuasive. For this reason, in circumstances where it is necessary for them to be evidenced, social workers are rightly inhibited from putting their hunches and intuition into play. As a result, vital opportunities for effective response to crisis can be missed.

In the wake of the Victoria Climbié case, social work academic Harry Ferguson talked of 'the sheer complexity' involved in developing a "presence of mind" in child protection. Strong management and accountability can help



workers in this area, says Ferguson, 'but ultimately only if the true complexities of practice are fully understood...Good child protection work requires staff to hone a keen intuitive sense to pick up signs of abuse or neglect, and to regularly reflect on their suspicions.'<sup>36</sup>

This is exactly what our consciousness games are about – developing a "presence of mind" To be able to observe one's thinking and articulate that observation can provide the social worker with a vital tool for communicating to others what their 'hunch' or 'intuition' is based on, and what gives it validity.<sup>37</sup>

One useful method is to be able to ask what is the *context* of the intuition? We could note:

- How we were feeling before and after the time we had our intuition.
- What we expected to find, given the history of the situation, and how that compared to what we actually found when we arrived there: what did that make us think?
- Whether or not the preliminary actions we were obliged to carry out according to social work guidance policy and practice – introductions, explanations, gentle enquiries – were easy to carry out, or whether they caused distinct discomfort for all present.
- Whether or not those present were able to communicate directly with us or not.
- Thoughts and feelings regarding the communication – or regarding what information was being conveyed.
- Divergence between descriptions of how things are and how they appeared from the way the people concerned were interacting.
- How we were feeling during the intuition – fearfulness or apprehension, awareness of tensions in the room between various people, etc.
- Pattern recognition: have you seen similar situations and felt the same way before?

The importance of developing consciousness is to be capable of articulating a feeling you:

- are not prepared for
- can't control
- can't ascribe to or associate with what you're seeing or hearing.

Developing the ability to become articulate about intuition can have two important benefits:

1. If the hunch / intuition can become recognised and acknowledged within the profession as substantial and discussable, the social worker will be able act with a greater sense of personal authority.
2. Social work professionals would be able to develop a new language for the special awareness that they have developed, in order to be able to work effectively in very sensitive and challenging situations.

The direct risk to life that is often involved in social work – particularly in child protection, criminal justice and mental health cases – raises the stakes for intuition, much higher, for example, than in business.<sup>38</sup> Intuition can be wrongly interpreted and, for the protection of both social worker and service user, it should not assume superiority over hard facts.

So intuition is not a substitute for hard evidence. But as social workers become increasingly intuition-literate, it has the potential to be recognised as a significant part of professional judgement and skill base of practice.<sup>39</sup>



There are interesting research options for developing this literacy. Citing a study on fire-fighters in action, Eileen Munro describes the balance between intuition (recognising the signs and patterns in a situation) and analysis (the ability to amend and redeem it) as it works out in a moment of urgency and crisis. The movements of thought and feeling should be familiar to social workers:

Experienced decision makers will be able to recognize patterns, to see similarities between the current problem and past problems. This helps them set priorities about what needs to be dealt with first, to know what information is essential, and it gives them an idea of what to expect next. By recognizing a situation as typical, they recognize a course of action likely to succeed. They do not act on their decision uncritically, but continue to evaluate it as they implement a solution using their imagination. They check their assessment against the past and the future. They weave a story around the known features of the situation to see whether they can plausibly fit into the scenario they have recognized. They also use their imagination to project into the future. They mentally simulate what should happen if their story is correct and, if the unexpected happens, it makes them question its accuracy.<sup>40</sup>

To use a suitably imaginative and futuristic metaphor (familiar to all *Star Trek* fans): social work needs Jean-Luc Picard, Data and Deanna Troi on the bridge – the confidence to act, the information to inform the action, and the intuition that this will be the right action.

## 2. Seeing ourselves as others see us

Another core skill in social work is effective communication between the social worker – when acting as a provider – and the service user in receipt of the service. However, because of the disparity in agency and power between the two, difficulties in communication are inevitable.

One of the key skills developed through consciousness games is a developing ability to appreciate and manage the multiplicity of perspectives available in any situation. Simple exercises can cause us to accept that the way we see ourselves is likely to differ significantly from how others see us. Equally, how we see service users is likely to be quite different from how they see themselves.

The benefits of this are clear:

- Communication between service provider and service user becomes easier as the social worker grows more attuned to the range of different perspectives.
- The social worker will have more tools to consider in preparation for a visit or an intervention.

**3. Aspiration work** All social workers are likely to have moments of disillusion, when the daily experience of work is not bringing fulfilment. In the midst of a struggle, it is easy to deeply question whether or not this kind of work is going to be ultimately rewarding or efficacious.

It is helpful at such moments to be able to re-connect, not only with a bigger picture of the daily achievements of social work, but also with a bigger picture of the self in the long term. This means both going back to one's original sense of commitment and enthusiasm, as well as projecting oneself forward into a vision of how things could be better. The benefits of this would be:

- On an individual level: to reconnect participants to a more enduring sense of the self – one that has long-term ideals and hopes for the future.
- On a group level: to promote a sense of group – or even vocational – identity at a time when the specific tasks of the individuals might divide them.

In all the above, learning how to observe one's own thinking is a vital element of self-management, delivering over time greater clarity of thought and confidence for action.

## Exploring and playing Consciousness games – how?



Consciousness games fall into a number of different categories. They all share the purpose of helping the participants to become aware of how and what they are thinking, just below the surface of their own immediate attention. Becoming aware leads to an ability to mediate our own thoughts – that is, to become detached from them sufficiently to be able to observe them and hence objectify them. This makes it possible for us to assess our own thinking and, in a number of ways, manage our thoughts.



**A. 'If Only...'** games are best executed quickly by participants, either working alone with a notepad, or in pairs (this takes a little more time, but can be more fun). They are designed to allow participants to dwell on the question of *Who Am I?*



1. Write down 10 words that describe you in any way you want.
2. If you could have been anything you wanted – other than a social worker – what would you have been? Name your three top options.
3. If you only had three months to live, what would you do?
4. If you only had 3 years to live, what would you do?
5. In no more than 10 words, what is your greatest fear?
6. In no more than 10 words, what is your greatest desire?
7. If you were God for one day, what specifically would you do (i) for the world (ii) for social work?

Feedback from this session should not be a large-scale confession! Instead, you should concentrate on eliciting from participants what they were surprised to learn about their own deep desires, hopes, fears, frustrations.

To complete this step, after they have completed question 7, ask them to cover over their answers, take a fresh sheet, and once again write down a second set of 10 words describing themselves. There are usually interesting discrepancies arising from the insights they

have had about themselves through answering questions 2 – 7. This is the first clue to discovering that we all have images of ourselves which, with the help of only a little introspection, prove to be quite superficial and can, in some cases, be quite erroneous.

**B. Perspectives** begins with one short game and proceeds to a second, much more challenging game. Again, both are conducted on an individual level with the facilitator leading the group.

1. Name your three favourite animals – quickly, without thinking.

This is a well-known game, mythically referred to as a staple of psychotherapy. Its findings should be taken lightly! The three animals reveal the following:

- The first is symbolic of how you see yourself.
- The second is symbolic of how you are seen by others.
- The third is the closest symbolic representation of how you actually operate in society.

The favourite animal is also the one you hold most dear, the one you instinctively admire – the image you yourself would like to live up to. The second favourite is a familiar character, but one that has a little less emotional impact on you – allowing you to be a little more objective about its attractive qualities. The third is almost the most interesting: because you are more emotionally detached from this choice, it represents a more considered view of what makes up an attractive, admirable object – whether person, set of values or situation. This third choice tends to be more evocative of the conscious choices you make about your behaviour and appearance in society.

The joy of this game is in comparing the results of these apparently arbitrary questions to your familiar knowledge of yourself. If you are amongst friends, ask them to comment on the appropriateness of the animal – or symbols – you have conjured up. Also, this game introduces the idea that there is more than one way to read your character and behaviour, depending on where you are looking from. Does it open up new perspectives for you?

2. The second game is designed to make you much more aware of your ability to observe things differently under variable circumstances – in this case, your state of mind.

- Plan a short walk – maximum 2 minutes round trip – that can be easily undertaken by your participants. It could simply be the route from the building entrance to your room, or between a series of rooms.
- Before the first trip on this route, ask them to sit for a few minutes and think of something that makes them very angry, and really concentrate on that anger and the situation that provokes it, for 1-2 minutes.
- Ask them to walk your prepared route in a normal fashion and then return to their seats.
- Ask them to sit and make a few notes about the walk, what they noticed about the spaces they walked through, any detail they wished to note.
- Having done that, ask your participants to sit and think about something that makes them very happy and hopeful, and to dwell on that for 1-2 minutes.
- Now send them again on the same route.



- When they return to their chairs, ask them to make notes about what they saw, what they can remember about the spaces – again, any details they wished to note.
- Compare the notes of the first walk to the second walk.

It is most usual in this game that the two reports are significantly different. The second generally shows up far more detail, including memories of what was hanging on the walls, the colour of the carpet, the appearance of the people met en route, and so on. The first report tends to be much more sparse, harder objects are noted – desks, stairs, doors, etc. In some cases, participants on the first walk can remember hardly anything they saw.

As with all these exercises, the lessons learned are very rudimentary. Nevertheless, the understanding that mood and recent experience colour the way we observe our environment is instantly grasped.

**C. Time and Space** is designed to promote an awareness of how our sense of ourselves can change subtly over time.

This exercise can be carried out using any number of different scenarios. It can be usefully done in groups – partly to stimulate more memories and partly for more fun! Ask each group to address the following questions in turn:

- Why did you originally want to go into social work? Write down at least three good reasons.
- Why are you a social worker today? Again, at least three good reasons.
- What would guarantee that you would still be a social worker in 10 years time? Another three reasons – as demanding as you like.

Finally, write up what you have noted on a white board or on sheets on the wall. How would you characterise the past as opposed to the present? And again, the present and past as compared to the projected future? Are there any surprises? How have you changed? Does this recall of the past change your idea of how you can be in the present? What effect does your dream for the future have on the present?

Please keep the information from this final exercise in a form that can be used for Mapping and Framing.



## Exploring and playing Storytelling — why?

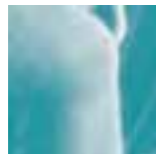


*It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisibly. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you. Beware the stories you read or tell: subtly, at night, beneath the waters of consciousness, they are altering your world.*



### Ben Okri, *The Joy of Storytelling*

Everyone has their story: and with the proper encouragement and the right context, everyone can tell their story. It is one of the few human skills, apparently, that we hardly need to learn.



Perhaps it is because storytelling is so elemental to our species: the means whereby humans first understood what was meant by the 'communal', the 'tribal', the 'social'. In hearing and telling stories, we build up a rich and complex picture of how human beings co-exist with each other.



If it is done in a structured and respectful way, participants in a storytelling session will reveal more than they expected about the subtler contours of themselves, their profession and their society. This expansion of consciousness is one of the prerequisites of Re-imagining.

### Clarifying what a story is and is not

What is the difference between a report and a story? Reportage is a description of what happened, made to fit the agreed interests of those listening, using the language of that medium, whether it be a newspaper or a social work report-back. A story, on the other hand, is told according to the agenda of the storyteller – it is s/he who decides what is important, what are the emotional triggers, whether what happened in the end is a happy or sad result. A story will tell you as much about the teller as about the teller's subjects.

A story is a picture composed of emotions and actions, turns of phrase and useful tricks, moments of distance and togetherness, all alternating and

intermixing with each other to fill the frame. Without telling and hearing stories, we would have a very impoverished and colourless view of ourselves and of our world.

Laws, policies, and professional practices are all well and good. But it is the stories and narratives which we tell about these frameworks – the fine-grained ways in which they enable and disable us, support and inhibit our initiatives – that we should be valuing much more than we currently do. The effectiveness of any policy or strategy that attempts to enact change in an organisation lies as much in the quality of the stories told about it as in its outcomes.

### Using stories to inform our practice

In social work, the powers of story and narrative are well understood in the relationships with customers. Finding the right empathetic story to describe the service user's situation enables a constructive dialogue to take place. Yet how often do social workers employ these empathetic skills as a way to address their own need for growth and development or the resolution of problems?

A story can be a fluid and supple connector between different realms of our lives.<sup>41</sup> In our Four Quadrants model for example, a story is a way of integrating the four different aspects of human experience and intention. On a *personal* level, these stories play a significant part in shaping our thinking and guiding our actions or *practice*; on a *people* or collective level, stories are helping to define our communities and prompt our *policies*.

In order to unravel some of these unspoken narratives, social workers should make this aspect of their practice explicit, and avail themselves of the opportunity to tell their own stories about their practice and experience before interested listeners and responders as often as possible. Of course, social work stories should not be divorced from the reality of



any situation. Yet a RISW session is not about basic factual reportage. In these sessions we are in a 'playspace': a safe zone where calculated risks can be taken, as we explore the landscapes of our interior and exterior worlds.

Some of those risks might be about having the confidence to start bringing 'intuition' into our usual stories about social work. Through storytelling, we can bring the qualitative and the subjective aspects of the social worker's insights to the attention of other people, in a structured yet open and challengeable way.

In particular, as the models in Framing and Mapping will show, social workers have to find a way to narrate their intuitive and holistic responses to what they see before them. Through story, they can find a way to articulate and hence begin to integrate these strong feelings about a situation which previously had little or no official currency in social work. Because so many social workers rely on their 'intuitive' responses (see Consciousness Games in previous pages), this intuition must find its appropriate place alongside all our other modes of perception and practice. Story-telling and -receiving is a good technique to help us begin to find that place.

## Exploring and playing Storytelling — how?



As we've already noted, it isn't too hard to extract stories from social workers! Constructing narratives about service users is a recognised element of case-work. Yet in terms of the focus of Re-imagining Social Work, it's important for social workers to see narration as a skill that needs careful cultivation.



We have provided a few exercises to help participants develop this skill.

### 1. The Definitive Social Work Story



Total time: 1 – 1½ hours. Two session leaders, split into note-taker and facilitator. In the information pack provided in advance of the opening session, ask participants to think up their definitive social work story. It's important to make it clear that there are no restrictions on what kind of story it should be.



The mood could be triumphant or despairing, a personal tale or a third-party observation. It could be a fictional version of reality, or a realistic fiction. It can be funny, sad, moving, analytical. It could even be in a different symbolic form – a poem, a lyric, a strip cartoon...

But it must be a story in its essentials – a tale with a plot, characters, a crisis or dramatic moment – which ends in some kind of transformation or resolution (for better or worse). It must be 'true' – meaning that it must attempt to evoke as much of the reality of an actual experience as possible.

In the session, the chairs should be arranged in a circle. According to the mood, invite speakers to tell their stories one by one, or encourage those people to speak up first who have indicated before the session their intention to tell their story. The time limit on the stories should be five minutes maximum.<sup>43</sup>



A few well-told stories at the beginning of the session releases a torrent of others – not just previously prepared stories, but new ones, memories recalled and suddenly given form. The 'permission' to narrate makes storytellers of the whole group.

The facilitator should ensure that keywords and phrases from the session are displayed on boards, to confirm the collective wisdom of the group. Facilitators should, at two or three points throughout the 90-minute session, try to gather together themes and remark on similarities and continuities in the stories being told. This is often necessary if the dynamics of the group mean that the story-telling is being slanted towards a particular territory by a few voluble (and perhaps expert) participants. Often it is those who are the quietest and most marginal in a group who can unleash a new area of inquiry, if their story is elicited at the right point. Facilitators should be alert to this.

Here are some headlines of stories that have been told in previous sessions. These stories are available in full from the 'Dundee Sessions' link on the Re-imagining Social Work website, at <http://www.reimaginingsocialwork.org>.

**A Win-Win Situation:** the abandoned school that united pensioners and asylum seekers.

**A Head Full of Nonsense:** the artist who happened to be a social worker – and felt he was doing the same thing in both realms.

**All About Eve:** the little girl and the social worker, who both had to move on.

**'I Knew You Wouldn't Leave Me':** reading the signs of abuse.

**Too Big For His Boots:** a story of three service users who gave a voice to the disabled.

**Dealing with the Person, Not The Case:** identifying the unique skills of a social worker.

**Dependence Is Their Life:** struggles with 'the family from hell'.

## 2. Story-Focusing

Total time: 50 mins

A particular subject or theme may become dominant in the minds of the participants. If there is energy and time left over, you can try this demanding and creative storytelling group activity, based on an idea by storytelling consultant Seth Kahan. Since every member of the group must get actively involved, it demonstrates how everyone can have a voice about the subject. It also introduces a democratic process for everyone to select which voices should be heard.

This exercise will also offer a welcome moment of physicality and some thoughtful movement around the room. It is also useful for groups larger than 20 (our optimum RISW size), breaking them up into smaller groups with tighter focus.<sup>44</sup>

- i. The session participants are addressed, and invited to 'story-focus' on an agreed headline that has clearly emerged from the day's discussions. Our example here is 'Dealing with the integrity of the family in child-abuse cases'. (5 minutes)
- ii. The participants break into small groups (even number). In the groups, each person shares their story about their experiences in this areas, taking no more than two minutes to tell that story. (15 minutes)
- iii. Once the stories have all been told, the groups are broken up and reformed – with half of each group joining half of another group. The stories are told again, this time to different listeners. (15 minutes)
- iv. All the group participants are asked to remember the story that was most memorable to them – and then to go and stand around that person. The story-teller(s) attracting the biggest crowd addresses all the session participants with their story, providing the 'story-focus' (5 minutes)
- v. Once the story-focusers have finished their tale(s), the whole group gets a chance to comment and discuss. All the group then suggest several key ideas from the focused story/stories stories – which have been written up on wipeboards or flipcharts. This generates more data for the Framing and Mapping sessions in Stage 2. (10 minutes)

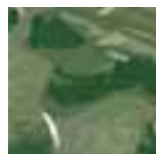
## Framing and mapping Introduction



At this stage in the Re-imagining process, many of the fragments of information elicited through games and new kinds of challenges will seem disconnected and arbitrary. Some of them take the form of opinions and assessments; others are hopes and dreams (perhaps some nightmares); still others are concrete proposals for change.



Framing and Mapping aims to make connections between these fragments in a way that will help participants as they prepare to Re-imagine on a bigger scale.



When you take a photograph, the camera aperture prompts you to make decisions about what to include and what to exclude from your *frame*. If you have a single object that you simply want to present in focus, it probably helps to use a very tight frame to keep that object central and uncluttered.



What you choose to leave in and what to leave out dictate what the viewer can understand about the reality for the object – whether it be a person or a thing – at that moment. For example: a full frame picture of a man pushing a child over tells one story. If you zoom out to the image of the fast-approaching car to the right of the child and include that in the frame, it tells a very different story. In news reporting, framing is all.

A *map*, meanwhile, grows and shrinks according to how far you want to go. A simple road map of the locality will show you a route from A to B, with a few options. A country map will offer far more options for longer journeys and may prompt new ideas for destinations. In both cases, however, the purpose is to link two or more names of places together by a road. The maps we will try to create here will perform a similar function – linking current realities with hoped-for destinations.

For training sessions in an organisation or workplace of any kind, the typical frame is quite tight, focusing on the participant in the context of the job.



The map of possibilities that might accompany that picture would lead from the current state of productivity to an increased productivity.

Re-imagining Social Work, however, works within much larger frames. These don't just include a picture of the participants in their current job or niche, but enlarge the picture and present them as thinking, feeling and aspirational human beings.

The *Play Ethic* process gives us a means of framing the subject by including information about our broader life narratives, motives and potential – the general ethos of our ever-changing societies. The understanding we gain from the *Fear and Love Loops* in the workbook widens the frame again, by admitting information about our internal drives into this picture.

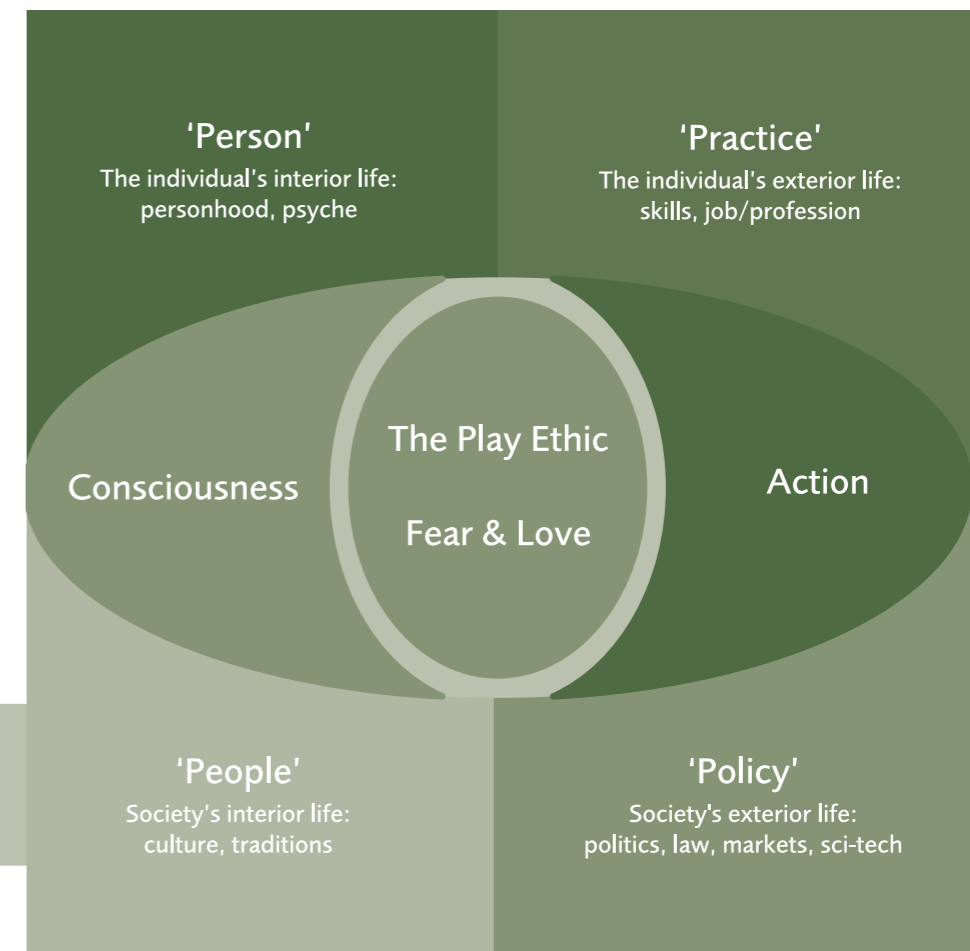
As a result, our picture has a very wide frame, packed with information about context and setting, as well as capacity and nature of the subject matter. It's the closest thing you will get to the truth: how it actually was – or is – for the participant.<sup>45</sup>

Such information cannot be mapped simply, merely outlining the individual's daily trajectory as s/he fulfils agreed tasks. This kind of conceptual thinking reveals deeper currents of culture, practice and policy theory. It provides information about the internal life of the participants, their nuances, skills and capacities. To successfully map all this information, we need a format which is itself complex.

**Four Quadrant mapping**

Four Quadrant mapping is both a quantitatively and qualitatively complex form of mapping, which can begin to include all this information as well as give it relevance to the agenda of development within social work. On the one hand, it has the scope of a great map of the human subject's world – from the internal life all the way through to the political reality. On the other hand, you can use it to focus down on small details of how one factor relates to another.

Framing and mapping are a means towards grasping the most comprehensive picture of reality – whether of a person or a situation. A new articulation of thoughts and emotions arising from the concept of the Play Ethic as well as from a new awareness of Fear and Love Loops can become part of a new map for social workers. Once this is mastered, social workers will be able to use this kind of information to get their bearings in the present moment. And from there, begin to plan a future.



The Four Quadrants

## Framing and mapping The Play Ethic — why?



Our activities in the Exploring and Playing sections have been about unfreezing the imagination of social workers, using a variety of cultural and mental techniques. It's been about reminding social workers of their original driving passion for the profession. Now we need to start placing this unleashed imagination within some usable frameworks, to harness some of this energy. And one way to start Re-imagining Social Work is to start re-imagining what we mean by work itself.



Take the words 'social worker'. No matter what you might say about them, you could never say that they evoke a lack of substance, seriousness or responsibility. As professional identities go, the social worker is generally regarded as one of those jobs which faces 'reality' full on. As the Department of Health 2001 surveys on public attitudes to social work shows, it is regarded as a valued but thankless task – 'a tough job to do under difficult circumstances', yet 'necessary and worthwhile'.<sup>46</sup>



How this identity makes social workers *themselves* feel about what they do is a question worth considering. There is no doubt that the term 'worker', for example – meaning someone who is compelled to apply themselves constructively and usefully to the world – can be a vessel for a lot of ethical and moral commitment to others. And specifically for social workers, this is a commitment to 'society' – which means supporting individuals in all their trials and tribulations, using collective resources of care and assistance.



The workers' identity of social work may evoke worthiness, toughness and necessity. But do these characteristics allow for all the expression of talents and capacities that the actual job of social work demands? We often lack the language and the mental frameworks to recognise those positive and inspiring elements of social work practice. We need a vocabulary to give them a legitimate name and place. And we need some concepts that can help us to develop and enrich these creative qualities of social work.

One approach is to try and use the *language of play* to re-imagine what we mean by the activities we usually call work. Using our more sophisticated understanding of play, social workers should be able to recognise points in their practice where they are not strictly 'at work', but are both 'in play' and 'at play'. For example:

- Dealing with the unconventional family whose habits, traditions and behaviours do not conform to strictly acceptable social norms – a family where adults and children put the usual parental authority structures and roles of responsibility into 'play'. Yet they nevertheless 'hang together' well – something not perceivable from a strictly work-ethic perspective.
- Responding sensitively, creatively and intensively to a child, youth or adult who takes an indirect, seemingly 'playful' approach to expressing their traumas and needs – using all manner of strategies (conversational, artistic, experiential) in one's response.
- Not suppressing the enthusiasm one feels when one's workplace team 'plays a blinder', achieving a great result with a problem case. Also, not denying the feeling of effectiveness and capability when crisis after crisis occurs – when the gods seem to be 'playing' with you – and one is ready and willing to rise to each challenge.
- Being at play within a social work institution means that the structure and culture of the workplace is constantly under review. It may not be enough to have an open-door policy or suggestion box. Staff need to be actively engaged in the 'game'. Regular open forums – which can take the form of coffee mornings, informal meal-time gatherings or something more structured like a workshop – encourage staff to bring new initiatives into the workplace.



From these initial insights, we have constructed a model of the 'Player' and his/her 'Seven Play Rhetorics' – meaning the seven ways that most people are 'at play or in play' in contemporary organisations. The exercises below take people through both a new understanding of what play means, and a personal and professional 'play audit' for themselves and their organisations.

Introducing social workers to this model at this stage in the Re-imagining process introduces the concept of 'Framing and Mapping' in an entertaining and thought-provoking way. The outcome of this session is to encourage each participant to compose their own version of a Play Ethic – an appreciation of 'social play', to complement and enrich their existing practice of 'social work'.

## Framing and mapping The Play Ethic – how?



These exercises aim to give participants a new framework of meaning and action for the great challenges of social work.

If until now they have:

- lacked initiative (executed their daily tasks, referring only to the contracted definitions of their job as a guideline for action)
- hesitated to take necessary action (either for want of courage or lacking some kind of connectedness)
- distrusted their seniors (rather than engage with them)
- developed a victim stance vis-à-vis the media and the public



– then it is likely that they are suffering from the worst excesses of a work ethic which reduces them to less than their fully potentialised selves between the hours of 9am and 5pm daily! Substituting play for work, but retaining the ethic part, will have the effect of lifting social workers out of a rut and encouraging them to use more of themselves in their job – without entirely losing the sense of shared purpose and goals within the profession.



The exercises will help to:

- give participants a different understanding of play;
- apply that understanding to the data generated by the Exploring and Playing sessions; and
- enrich their own evolving narratives of social work.

### Playing With The Media

An easy way to demonstrate the diversity of ways that we understand and use the word play – as both noun and verb – is to do a 'play search' on the last few days' newspapers. For session leaders, this entails going through a mixture of broadsheets and tabloids, and simply noting the headlines and stories where 'play' (and its various tenses and modulations) is used as an explicit term.



When this prepared material is brought to the participants and explained, this instantly delivers a very varied range of meanings for play. For example:

- George Bush talked to the main players in the Palestine-Israeli dispute today...*
- Children's play is being threatened by protective parents...*
- Companies are clamping down on employees 'playing around' with the internet...*
- Partick Thistle's defence played a blinder last night ...*
- Ministers tried to play down the row over students fees...*
- The National Lottery's new 'Daily Play' was launched today...*
- Playing the Barrowlands last night, Steely Dan were...*
- Blair's mother had always played a major role in his life...*

**Note:** In the advance session notes, session leaders should encourage participants to bring in their own examples of the explicit use of 'play' in the media – and to look at that morning's papers, if possible, to pick out some up-to-the-minute examples.

The next part of the exercise is to imagine what kinds of actions, and what kind of actors, are implied by these meanings of play. For example:

- GW Bush story: players exercising political power.*
- Children's story: play represents health and natural energy.*
- Companies story: playing around means triviality, non-productiveness.*
- Partick Thistle story: played as a team, as a strong group.*
- Ministers story: playing down means to control how something is seen, and imagined.*
- National Lottery story: play as a risk, a gamble, a shot in the dark.*
- Steely Dan story: play as performance, creativity, artistic expression.*
- Blair story: playing a role in someone's life script, the narrative we try to shape.*

These definitions are all engagements with the world (as the root of the word 'play' implies) – individuals seeking to exercise their will and agency, both with and against others. So to be a player is to have a 'bias for action', to seek a way to make a mark on the world. And that can happen equally inside the workplace and outside it.

Can some of that player's energy and inventiveness be brought *inside* the organisation and profession, to revitalise and re-imagine its structures? Can a workspace become more like a playspace, in the sense of being creative, productive and, most importantly, engaged at all levels?



**Doing A 'Play Audit'**

The aim of a play audit is to provide a thought-provoking measurement of the diverse opportunities for engagements and creative actions that take place within a social worker's organisation or within their own professional (and personal) lives. From that picture, it may be possible to enrich their own ideas for development.

- Use the sun-graphic on page 34 to communicate the idea of the 'player' as someone who lives his/her life as an expression of the *seven rhetorics of play* – individual, imaginative, healthy, power, social, cosmic and trivial.
- Now set up a fresh sun-graphic, and try to map the most appropriate of the existing 'Exploring and Playing' data on display throughout the room to the play rhetorics. Mark with a '+' data that tells a positive story about any particular rhetoric, and with a '-' to mark a negative story.

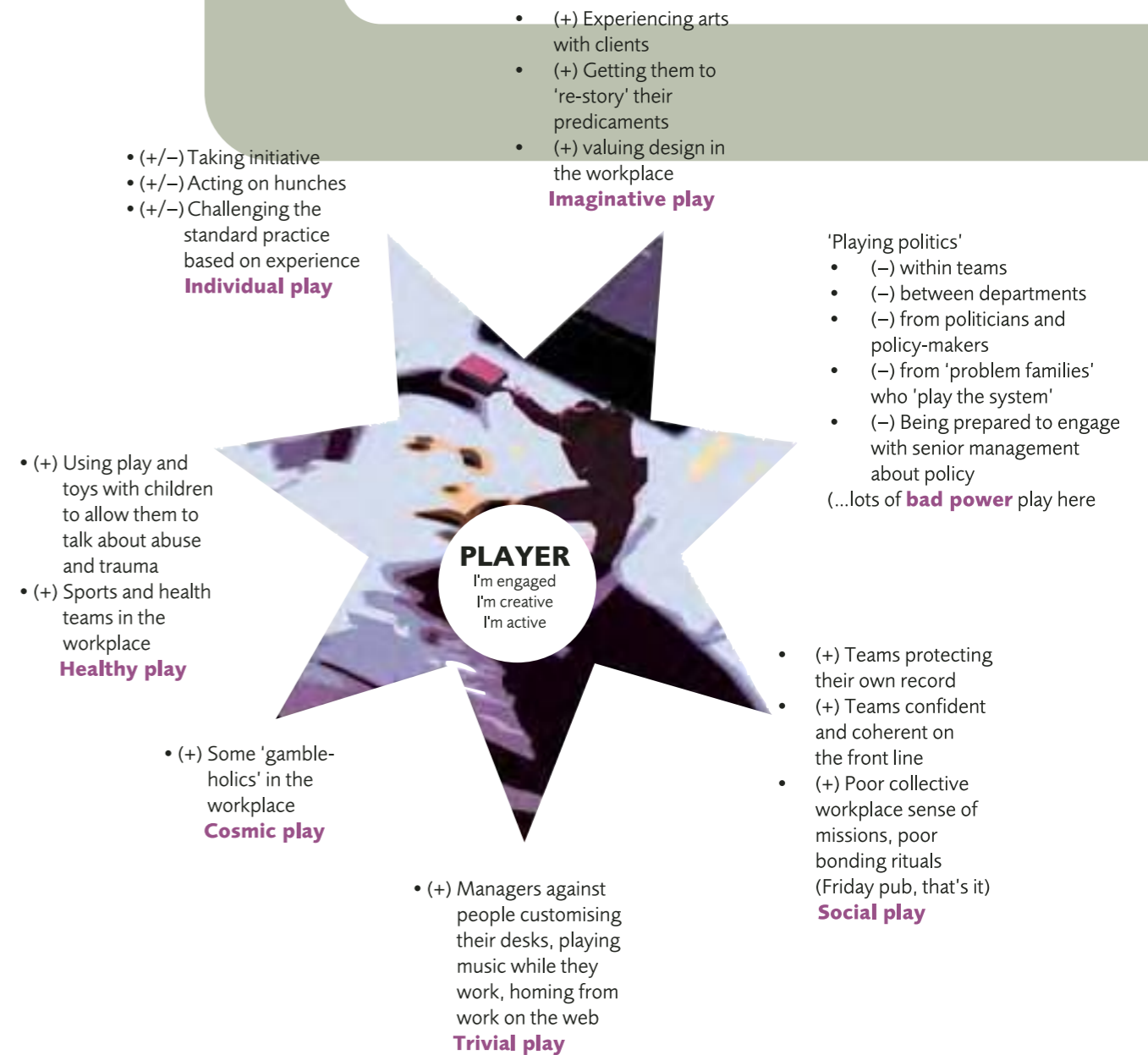
What will begin to emerge is a sense of the 'state of play' in this particular social work group – the balances and ratios of forms of play relative to each other, as well as the overall scope of the workplace as an imaginative space.

It is important to remember that in any person, phenomenon or situation, there should be a presence (however variable) of each form of play. So the play audit is a learning and measurement tool, not a telling and controlling tool. It is a way of assessing the shape and quality of the social work imagination.

This *state of play* could generate a number of possible responses:

- Where a form of play is regarded as an entirely or mostly *negative* force within social work (power play in the above example), then this is an invitation to imagine how more positive understandings could occur. Is there something about the bureaucratic mind-set of social work that allows power play to proliferate wildly? Should these tendencies be kept in check – and what counter-tendencies could be initiated?
- Sometimes these counter-tendencies could be initiated by turning some other play rhetoric negatives into play-positives, for example, working on general workplace collegiality, through devising better collective rituals. Perhaps there needs to be more autonomy given to confident, experienced social workers, who get lost in middle-management? Perhaps releasing the inspiration of these characters will inspire others to follow?
- Rhetorics of play that are mostly or unreservedly positive (in this model, imaginative play) could be seen as an example of possible excellence in social work.

This exercise is an example of what the games guru Bernie De Koven calls 'deep fun'. That is to say, using and thinking about play – especially in its 'deep' meaning of engagement – to revitalize our sense of purpose and agency in the world. So do have some deep fun with this!



Sample of 'play audit' taken from RISW sessions

## Framing and mapping Fear and love loops — why?



Social workers are often faced with the dilemma of handling two different kinds of knowledge in their practice, which often appear to contradict each other. Sometimes these are described as tacit and implicit, at other times as empirical and intuitive – although neither of these dualisms fully describes the two. The clash between them raises questions like this:



*'How do we know what's really happening in this situation?'*

*'What am I supposed to do – when guidelines say 'do this', and my instincts and experience say, 'do different' or even 'the opposite'?''*

*'How do we know when we're doing well as a team?'*



*'Is it the quantity of our successes with users and customers that's important, or the quality of those successes?...'*



Social workers face these dilemmas in circumstances which can be life-threatening, emotionally challenging, or affecting the liberty or the life chances of the people they work with, in extreme ways.

One face of social work is essentially *holistic*, trying to understand and communicate with the totality of any human situation. But another face is *analytical*, narrowing down on one aspect of the problem in order to be able to deal with it. Social workers have the statutory powers to intervene in these situations in direct and often high-consequence ways. Both the holistic and the analytical context of these approaches are legitimate and valuable as responses to a situation. But they often appear to be contradictory and that can cause problems, both for the worker and for the service user.

Trying to formulate the 'least unhappiest' course of action in social work – let alone the happiest one – is a highly demanding goal. At the very least, social workers need some useful models of the relationship between self and world to help them analyse their reactions to the phenomena before them, in a conscious and self-reflecting way. As F Scott Fitzgerald famously said: "The sign of a brilliant mind is being able to hold two opposing truths in your mind at the same time."

The Fear and Love Loops are a possible 'compass' for social workers as they navigate their flows of knowledge. The Loops show that two seemingly antithetical mind-sets can be part of a continuum, in which the values of both can be ultimately acknowledged. While it may at times be appropriate to operate in the Fear Loop – seeking to grasp the facts and control the damage – this approach may prove to be limited in making deeper, lasting changes to deal effectively with circumstances.

Moving into the Love Loop, when the time is right, might offer new ways to relate to the situation and to the individuals concerned, and serve to bring about the kind of development and improvements that guidance from new policies and structures in themselves cannot achieve.

What is important is that, rather than having to choose between the two limited ways of operating, the social worker is made aware of the potential to move between these two ways of knowing and acting at all times.

For participants, the Loops are intended to be as much a provocation as a description. 'Fear' and 'Love' are two of the strongest human emotions, essential to our survival as evolved creatures. When an organisation or team, a family or community is in a state of crisis, it can be useful to map out these emotional polarities.

Layers of more subtle variations can then be sketched in as the group works through the essential distinction that the Loops make between these two different ways of 'knowing'.



**Refinements on the Fear Loop**

For example, there might be (as the diagram on the right shows) a kind of 'smart fear' involved in knowing-by-control. This is the place where 'evidence-based' approaches to social work practice find their proper location – not as some kind of pure

research base that leads to unerringly correct decisions, but as a learning resource which can guide (if not determine) the whole and rounded practice of the social worker.

Another refinement on the Fear Loop might be the use of IT systems and 'smart networks'. These would empower the worker in the field, by enabling much more 'real-time' monitoring of the progress of cases – releasing them to be in the field and nearer to clients.<sup>48</sup>

A 'smart fear' would recognise that the deliberations and 'meetings culture' that characterises social work have some justification – discussion is necessary when dealing with complex cases. Can we – as in a business culture – take our bureaucracy with us and automate some of its functions? Such technical systems would never work without a supportive culture: this means 'network-conscious' social workers, willing and able to use the technology for improving their own practice.<sup>49</sup>

**Refinements on the Love Loop**

- One way not to get 'lost in the Love Loop' might be by prioritising 'trust' rather than 'love' as the dominant emotion. Trust involves effort on both sides, whether between members of a team, or between worker and service user. Trust also connects the social work task with broader societal issues. How much 'social capital' is there in the community?
- The value of respect, compassion and empathy should also be considered in the social work relationship.<sup>50</sup>

We use the Fear and Love Loops as a 'radar sweep' through the deep emotions and motivations of the social work experience. The aim is both to identify and strengthen what is already there, and then to add to the psychological toolkit already possessed by social workers, by their own increased monitoring of their responses.

As social workers become ever more aware of the internal performance of themselves and others in any circumstance, they can use this awareness to more judiciously and expertly shape their external performance with service users and colleagues, in order to give greater direction to the intended outcomes of their work.



Sample Fear and Love exercise taken from RISW sessions

## Framing and mapping Fear and love loops — how?



The Fear and Love Loops model is intuitively easy to understand. Symbolically, it taps into images like the Yin-Yang symbol of Chinese philosophy or the Moebius strip of mathematics – images that try to reconcile or manage the eternal dualisms of human behaviour and understanding.



The important thing to remember is that the two parts work best as a connected whole. The mind can flow from moments of 'fear' driven actions (desire to control, categorise, make safe) to moments of experience guided by 'love' (wish to participate, empathise and influence). It does not require two different people to have these two motivations: they can co-exist within the one person.



### Exercise 1

Give participants handouts of the basic Loops model – the graphic and annotations as on page 28. Also, you should arrange for a giant printout of the basic Loops model to be put on a display board, with lots of scribble space around the graphic. (Graphic files of these loops are available at the end of the Workbook, as well as on the website, <http://www.reimaginingsocialwork.org>.)



Go through some simple exercises that can illustrate what is meant by these two different 'ways of knowing', in a non-social-work context. For example:

- **A football manager** in relation to her team. She both *knows by control* – the tactics and plan of the night's performance, based on research on the opponents beforehand; and *knows by participation* – the motivation and inspiration of players, the monitoring of particular characters and tendencies, her sense of their camaraderie.
- **An ecologist** in relation to an environmental situation. He both *knows by control* – applying science and measurement to the rates of pollution, extinction, etc, in a particular forest or ecosystem. And he *knows by participation* – the sense of connection with nature, his time spent

## Framing and mapping : Fear and love loops : How?

immersed in this particular area, the development of a holistic instinct for the change in climate or the inner behaviour of an animal.

- **A police officer** in relation to her community beat. She both *knows by control* – using communications to stay in touch with other officers, search databases instantly for records and references, being a visible physical (and even armed) presence in the streets. She also *knows by participation* – the community and school visits, the openness to being approached by citizens, listening to suspects and complainants for the specifics of their case.

### Exercise 2

Talk them through an explanation of the loops, using these kinds of headlines:

**A: How do social workers know what they know? What counts as a 'fact' or an 'opinion' in social work?**

- Are the emotional underpinnings behind each realm made explicit and conscious to the worker in practice? The Loops make it clear – or at least begin the argument – that emotion is involved in even the most apparently 'objective' judgements. And conversely, that a 'subjective', qualitative assessment of a situation can also have the status of knowledge, if the framework of that knowledge is properly set up.
- 'Informed intuition' – being able to see the whole of a situation, and being able to check that against evidence and existing practice – is the result of being self-conscious about these two forms of knowing. What would that informed intuition need to be developed and instilled in social workers? (See the Core Ideas – Four Quadrants section for a more comprehensive example of this).

**B: Do social workers recognise that they can get trapped in a 'Fear Loop' of control, and a 'Love Loop' of immersion and participation?**

- Social work can easily get locked into one or other of these polarities. It is worth exploring with the participants whether 'hope' and 'play' are enough to get social workers out of the Fear Loop, and 'disappointment' and 'withdrawal' are enough to get them out of the Love Loop. Are there any different terms which can enable social workers to move fluidly between the two ways of knowing, without becoming trapped in either of them? This is a word game that can be used to enrich the model substantially.

As much of this data as possible – from options 1 and 2 – should be noted up on the main Loops display by the other facilitator. If the loops have been as provocative as they usually are, the big printout should be covered in layer upon layer of ideas and qualifications.

If this is becoming too dense, suggest that the groups break into two or three, to work on their own large-sheet models of the two ways of knowing in social work. They might even suggest some more ways of knowing than the two! Or they might rest their work on a different visual image than just the circular polarities of the Fear and Love Loops.

Don't worry about this: what's happening is the 'Re-imagining' process in action. This is generating much data that can be mapped onto the much more comprehensive Four Quadrant map which comes later.

## Framing and mapping The four quadrant model - why?



Here are four familiar social work scenarios:

**Scenario 1:** There is a repeated problem in the department. Too many times when we thought we had all points covered, someone messes up. Twice this has had very serious consequences for care users we thought we were taking good care of. Some of the workers just won't do what they are asked to do – although they've had plenty of training and support. They just can't see what's really going on.



**Scenario 2:** We've established this department over many years. We have great training programmes and excellent feedback systems – none of our staff need ever feel unsupported. People come from miles around to join this team. But we don't seem to have much impact on those we are working with. Just the other day, another one of our difficult cases made the headlines. We're doing our best but *we don't seem to be winning*.



**Scenario 3:** We've been trying to initiate special meetings for the Asian community, but the kids just aren't interested. The mums and dads are happy to come along and really appreciate the space to talk and exchange. But the younger ones won't come anywhere near us and they're the ones we really need to reach.



**Scenario 4:** It was a pretty straightforward directive which just had to be put in place before the conference. Meals on Wheels were to be delivered half an hour later each day to give the kitchen staff a morning and afternoon break. The last thing we need right now is a walk-out. But none of the regional managers agreed to implement the change – they're such a difficult bunch.

### Application of a Four Quadrant analysis

What could a Four Quadrant analysis bring to the interpretation and framing of these particular problems?

It might be useful here to simulate the experience of using a 4Q method in real professional practice. By doing this in a creative session, directors and shapers can rehearse the 'feel' of what a real-world outcome might be.

4Q is most useful when the problem is most intractable. For example, when it seems as if there are too many factors to consider. When each seems to be reinforcing the other in a mysterious or perverse way and the whole 'mess' is beyond the perspective of any of the players and stakeholders involved.

A manager or front-line worker would start by trying to map the essential elements of the problem onto the Four Quadrants:

**Person:** How it exists in the internal thoughts and feelings of the person(s) at the core of the issue.

**Practice:** How it is reflected in their external life and actions.

**People:** What values and culture make it meaningful.

**Policy:** What national or local policies order and direct it.

There is no need to be too rigid about the mapping at the start. Just beginning the process of sorting out the different aspects of problems into their distinct quadrants of experience will quickly reveal the potential for a fresh approach.

As the participant finally sees the full map of the problem, s/he can then begin to chart out some development lines in each quadrant. This then gives the worker a tool to help assess the kinds of changes required in each sector, in order to bring about a positive development.

For example, it could reveal that, in some quadrants, the situation is actually quite well evolved already, at a level of sophistication and complexity. The question is whether the remaining quadrants can be 'taken upwards' to a similar level of sophistication. If not, we can at least make clear the difficulty of doing so.

Even our initial, simple 4Q analysis can reveal which quadrant needs most attention. In each of our example scenarios, we are focusing, one by one, on the issues covered by the Four Quadrants. For example:

**Scenario 1** focuses on the Person. This can be addressed by the inner capacity of individual social workers to carry out tasks. Is the problem simply the need for training – or are there more complex reasons why the social worker cannot 'hear' instructions?

**Scenario 2** focuses on Practice. How do the department and its workers relate as professionals to the community? Is there a need for a new vision for operating within the community? Could this perhaps be achieved through partnership and co-operation that is not yet happening? Does the departmental manager feel any responsibility for local people or only for his team?

**Scenario 3** focuses on People. The older generation of the Indian family values a community approach but their children, many of whom were born in the UK, have moved on. Although they may still feel on the outside of the dominant British culture, they are of it and value individuality as much as the next British teenager.

**Scenario 4** focuses on Policy. Policy-makers are trying to respond to pressure from above and below without proper consultation with the parties that will be most affected – the staff at the front line responsible for implementation and the service user who will be affected by the policy change.

Don't F.R.E.T. – be @ E.A.S.E.

From these examples it becomes clear that a single quadrant perspective is never enough. Once you have expanded your view to include all four perspectives, you can't go back. Your mind has literally expanded, causing you to see the problem in a much broader context. The benefits of this approach are many:

DISCOURAGES	ENCOURAGES
<b>F</b> rustration	<b>E</b> ngagement with other perspectives
<b>R</b> esistance to change	<b>A</b> daptation and ownership of problem and policy
<b>E</b> xcludedness, victim mentality	<b>S</b> hared inclusion – we are all in this together
<b>T</b> raps created by narrow minds	<b>E</b> nterprise and dynamism – the ability to move between perspectives, think laterally, become visionary
<b>SO...DON'T F.R.E.T.</b>	<b>BE @ E.A.S.E.</b>

#### 4Q Analysis

##### What are the effects/benefits of using the Four Quadrant analysis?

4Q thinking vastly increases our perception of the actions we can take. For example, not only do those concerned with Practice start to think about how progress can be made by considering the capacity of the Person who carries this out, but they can also simultaneously begin to address core values (People) and appropriate guidance (Policy).

If you then add the new sets of possibilities offered by the developmental lines, you begin to have a much larger imaginative space for action than before. This is partly an exercise of getting the lie of the land in its fullest sense. Having mapped out the data onto the Four Quadrant map, one should pause to take in the picture of reality as it is displayed there. Think of it in terms of numbers alone:

- **A single perspective within one quadrant, with no possibility of development, provides one possibility.** This is usually the case when all the responsibility for failure or success rests upon one person or one situation – for example, a person who is not good enough, a practice which doesn't get results, a culture block which can't be shifted, a law which seems draconian.
- **A single perspective within one quadrant with a developmental line, offering (say) seven stages of development, gives the potential for seven possibilities.** Consider the problem arising in the Person quadrant. If we were to apply the developmental line, this would mean accepting the limitations of the individual for now, possibly appointing someone else for that task, and assessing the qualities needed to fulfil the task. The person who had been assessed as being unable to carry out the task would play a key role in deconstructing the difficulties encountered. S/he would help to identify and construct the training or experience needed to bring him/her up to speed. As each stage of development is identified, new possibilities for action arise. This process also helps provide guidelines as to how the department could be restructured to deliver (Practice) as well as raising questions about the Policy itself.
- **The Four Quadrants or perspectives, each with seven stages of development within them, present us with 28 possibilities.** In this full use of the 4Q model, where each



## Framing and mapping The four quadrant model — how?

quadrant is mapped out with a developmental line, the possibilities for action and change are diverse and informative. In the example above, a social work department manager, having seen that the problem arises from a mis-match of person with task, considers how to actively develop his worker's capacity for coping with such complex tasks. The social worker in question suggests that if she had more time for reflecting on the observations she makes on her home visits with more experienced colleagues, she would learn how to process them. Not necessarily by instruction, but simply by having the space to hear herself and be reflective. Acknowledging the Person quadrant gives the manager a concrete way to bring this worker up to a new level of competency.

In other cases, it would be more subtle: for example, a group not directly involved in policy-making might imagine a line of development for policy which would address their concerns more effectively. This act of imagination would help them create a space of possibility: they could also communicate their ideas to the policy-makers and help to influence future change.

When we become aware of the Four Quadrants, we are literally raising our levels of consciousness. We are able to take in a much more complex view of reality than before. The social worker and the manager now have a multi-dimensional model to deal with what are often multi-dimensional problems and opportunities.

And in the search for outcomes, Four Quadrant thinking is a process that allows social work professionals to draw on new resources within themselves and within colleagues – ensuring that no factors, and no voices, will be disregarded in the search for the best possible result. The ultimate outcome of using this process can be social workers with improved capacities.

Four Quadrant thinking creates the mental and emotional conditions in which the faintest cries as well as the strongest ideas can be heard. These can then be applied to improve practice and inform managers. The exercises in the following 'How' section are to be used to introduce participants into Four Quadrant thinking.



Most of us experience life with an emphasis on one of the Four Quadrants – this is our particular way of looking at life's opportunities and challenges.

For example:



- If we value **personal ability or satisfaction**, we might ask 'Can I / we handle this? Is this fulfilling?' This is a Person Q perspective, emphasising individual needs.



- If we value **taking correct action**, we might ask 'Is this best practice? How can we change this way of working?' This is a Practice Q perspective, emphasising effective behaviour and practice.



- If we value **the culture of the workplace, family or nation**, we might ask 'Is this right? Do we like this?' This is a People Q perspective, emphasising our collective values (or culture).

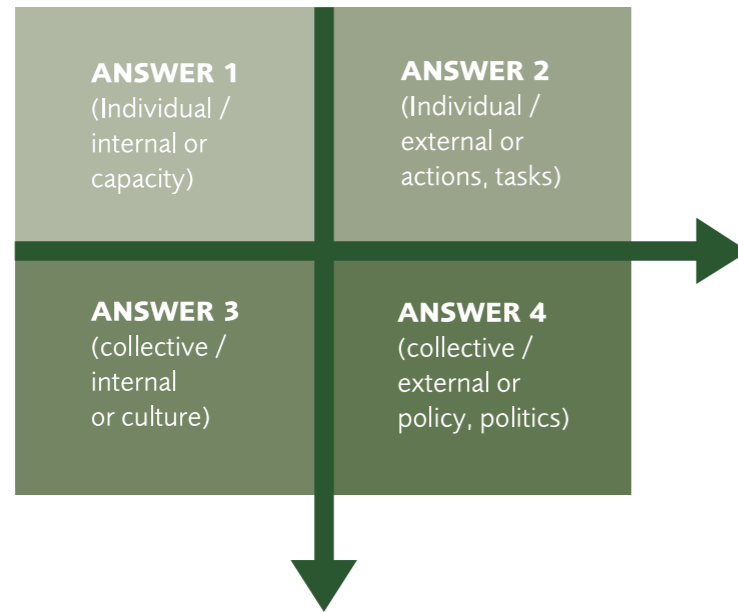
- If we value **the rules, policies and politics that guide us**, we might ask what new laws need to be passed? How is the policy failing to deliver? This is a Policy Q perspective, emphasising collective action (or politics).

However, few people are aware that they are orientated towards one of these quadrants at the expense of an awareness of the others. Over-emphasis on any one of the quadrants can lead to frustration, as meaningful change can rarely be affected by acting in one quadrant only.

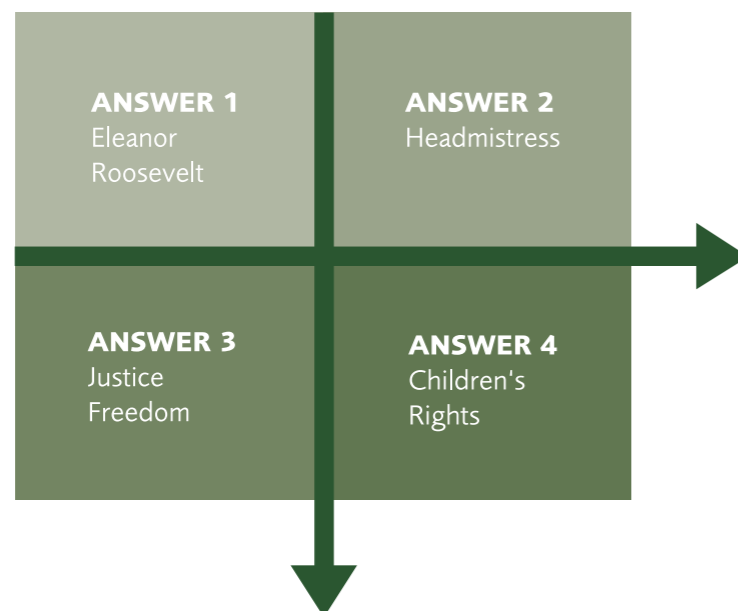
The following exercises help participants to distinguish between the four possible ways of looking at life. They can then see which is their dominant perspective.

### Exercise 1

Ask each of the participants to answer the following questions without hesitation or deliberation, writing their answers on a piece of paper. (Don't forget to ask 'Why?' at the end of questions 1 and 2 –



Example of a completed Four Quadrant Analysis



it's important to forestall any fears about the facilitator drawing easy conclusions from the answers offered.) Questions should be answered in no more than five words.

1. Which famous person, dead or alive, would you most want to be? Why?
2. If you could do any job in the world, what would it be? Why?
3. What are your three most important values in life?
4. What is the law you would most like to change and how would you change it?

Each one of these questions requires the participant to enter into each of the four aspects of experience in turn, as shown below. Using a simple Four Quadrant cross, enter the responses in as follows:

While it is important to refrain from any strong or quick judgements on character here, the questions and their responses illustrate the Four Quadrants in these ways:

1. **Favourite personality** prompts the participant to think in terms of *'being'*. The kind of personality chosen indicates the favoured emotional state of the participant and to some extent the capacity s/he aspires to.
2. **Favourite job** prompts the participant to think in terms of *'doing'*. The kind of job chosen indicates, amongst other things, what level of responsibility the participant enjoys.
3. **Favourite values** prompts the participant to think of *shared experience*, how s/he interacts with others. Mostly the choices describe what kind of culture the participant is familiar with.
4. **Specific law** prompts the participant to think about *hopes beyond personal needs* – a bigger picture of what s/he is working towards. The choice of law describes what kind of society the participant is hoping to build.

Each one of these quadrants represents aspects of life experience in the consciousness of the participant, hence s/he has at least four different realities operating at the same time. Once a participant recognises that existence can be mapped across these four aspects, they can be applied to any phenomenon, be it person, organisation, system or problem.





### Exercise 2

Break into groups and carry out the following:

Choose a soap opera or favourite musical and deconstruct it into Four Quadrants by answering the following questions:

**For Person Q:** What is the dominant internal state of the characters? Is there more than one?

**For Practice Q:** What do they do – work, play, practice?

**For People Q:** What are the key prevailing values of this community?

**For Policy Q:** What is the nature of the political life in this soap/musical?

By now the participants will be getting used to the four different ways of describing things. Ask each of them to consider this question:

**Thinking of the four perspectives offered, which would you be most inclined to use as a starting point to describe that soap opera?**

For example, which one of these descriptions best suits East Enders?

- It's full of angry people who are really hard on each other: this is the Person Q.
- It's a soap about people who work in the East End – stall owners and criminals: this is the Practice Q.
- It's all about the incredible camaraderie that exists between people struggling to make ends meet: this is People Q.
- It's a powerful picture of what happens when education is the lowest priority: this is Policy Q.

*This could be drawn into the blank Four Quadrant pro-forma on page 40.*

The description which makes the point best for you indicates your dominant quadrant.

### Exercise 3

Look at all the data that has been gathered from the exercises in Stage 1 of RISW. Split into groups again and see if you can sort the data and distribute it amongst the Four Quadrants. You have to decide which data is relevant to Person Q, Practice Q, etc.

Here are some clues:

**Person Q:** stories or thoughts about personal needs and abilities

**Practice Q:** information about good and bad practice

**People Q:** thoughts about prevailing values or lack thereof

**Policy Q:** ideas for new policy, recognition of political themes

If necessary, you could use an example from the Dundee sessions here, either to illustrate the outcome or when there is no time to do the exercise (see [www.reimagining-social-work.org](http://www.reimagining-social-work.org)).

### Exercise 4

Using the Core Ideas explanation of the Four Quadrants as our starting point, this exercise will enable us to begin to identify the lines of development in each section. During this session we will start to see a relationship of progress or growth between the different pieces of data in the quadrant. For example, we can start to see the link going from Ability to Listen /Ability to Hear/Ability to Respond, in the Person Q.

In this session, you should ask the group to consider each quadrant in turn and see if there is any way that they can form them into a development line. For example:

**In Person Q:** Are there different bits of data acknowledging different levels of capacity?

**In Practice Q:** Is there data alluding to different levels of activity and / or responsibility?

**In People Q:** Can you perceive some values expressed here that would give rise to an increasingly sophisticated culture or society?

**In Policy Q:** Are there any policies mentioned that look forward to a more progressive society than others?

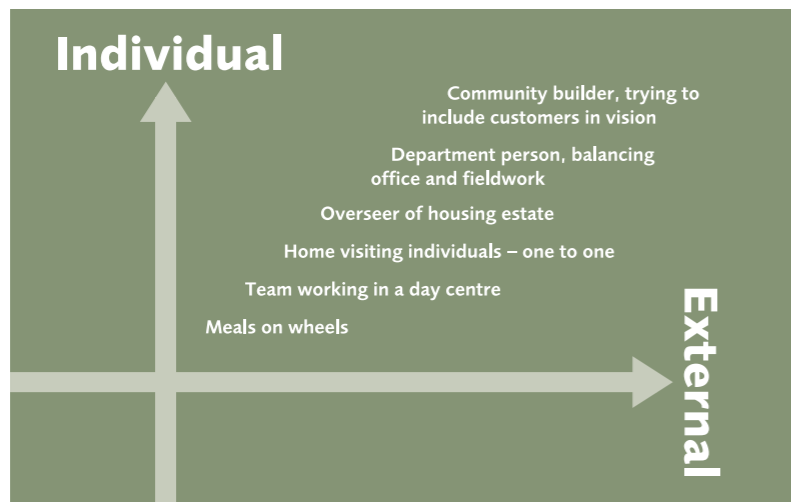
If you can find them, try to place them in an order which can draw a line from the less developed towards the more developed. Although it is important to decide within the group what would constitute the criteria for development, see opposite (below) for examples of possible lines.

Framing and mapping : The four quadrant model — how?

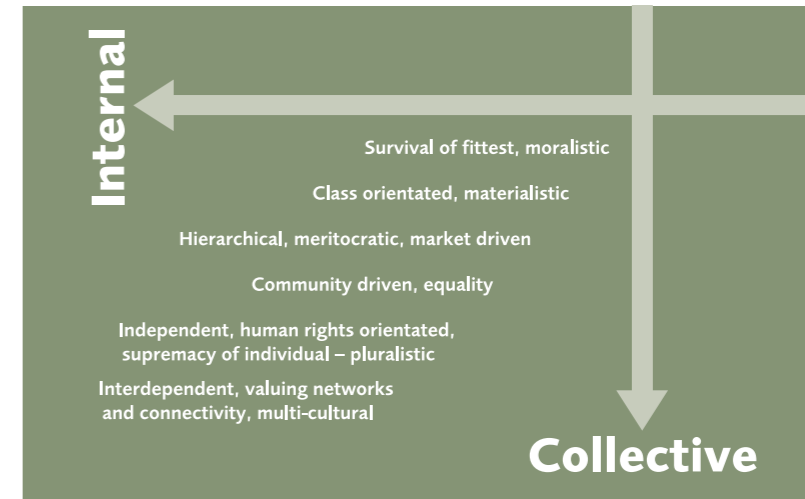
QUADRANT 1 – Upper left quadrant: individual, internal capacities



QUADRANT 2 – Upper right quadrant: individual, tasks



QUADRANT 3 – Lower Left quadrant: collective, values



QUADRANT 4 – Lower right quadrant: collective actions, rules, policies



Provided by SWSI /ADSW

FULL FOUR QUADRANT MODEL



The four examples above and right should be put on one Four Quadrant diagram. Beginning with the Person Q in the top left, they should be placed clockwise in the diagram as indicated. The development lines should then radiate from the centre of the diagram, with the point of least development at the centre, radiating outwards to the point of greatest development at the edge.

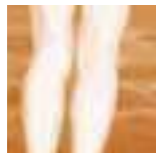
We now have a Four Quadrant analysis of the subject with development lines allowing you to see a much more complex reality. With this map, you can clearly see the lie of the land in any given situation – all of its Personal, Practical, People and Policy aspects. The map also illustrates how we can develop and change in each of those areas.

The aim is not to offer instant solutions to problems, but to expand our ability to assess them properly, giving us more confidence as well as increasing our capacity to deal with the difficulties we are faced with in the workplace.

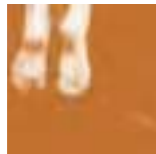
## Provoking and re-imagining Introduction



By this stage of the Re-Imagining method and process, those who have stayed with the journey so far should begin to find themselves, and their ideas about their profession, in quite a different place. The question is: where to go with all this buzzing creativity? A brief recap of the preceding stages might help.



In **Exploring and Playing**, we invited participants to investigate the narratives and images that currently dominate social work in the wider culture. We asked them to deconstruct that material, loosening the grip on their minds of some of its more damaging dualisms. We also introduced workers to some consciousness tools and forms of storytelling, pointing to ways in which new stories and visions about social work could be *constructed*, not just deconstructed.



In **Framing and Mapping**, we try to place all the contents of the previous session within frameworks and maps. These try to connect our imagining about social work to a wider world. The point is to encourage a 'big-picture' perspective among social workers, fuelled by their own experiences, passions and insights. This builds the confidence to suggest improvements and address issues in *all* the 'Four Ps' of social work – person, people, practice and policy – and to seek an ever-improving integration between them all.



In **Provoking and Re-imagining**, we try to emerge from this process with some tangible 'creations' – stories, new paradigms, models, metaphors – that will maintain the spirit of Re-imagining beyond these sessions, and prove usable in everyday working life.

- The session leaders begin with their own '**provocation**' – their particular interpretation of the dominant themes and specific insights that have emerged. This is intended as a gentle testing of the new conceptual and emotional understandings gained about social work practice. Healthy debate is encouraged – but all in a spirit of serious play!



This exercise can provide the basis for whatever specific policy and practice outcomes might be required from the sessions.

- In the final exercise, participants shift from the analytical to the creative – closing the circle of **Re-imagining** that began with the first exercise in Cultural Narratives in 'Exploring and Playing'. The aim here is to try and encapsulate all the insights and visions of the previous days in a 'new narrative' of social work – one that is more robust, subtle and capacious than the narratives that the profession is usually trapped in.

## Provoking and re-imagining Provocation — why?



By this point, the participants will have worked and played their way through a wide variety of conceptual and emotional techniques. Not only will they be more aware of the operations of their own consciousnesses and the value of their own experiences, but they will also have the frameworks and maps to guide their own new pathways and compose visions of their professional lives as social workers. They are ready to fully 're-imagine'.



Using only the material gathered, the facilitators should draw out an inventive and daring new vision of social work. The purpose is to break through barriers for the participants – go where angels fear to tread. Of course, you should encourage them to react and disagree with your version – but the important thing is to give them permission to be as creative as possible and not stick to something that is simply safe and recognisable.

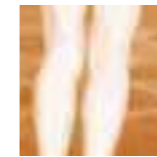


This is a provocation that should be 'pro-vocation'. It should be *for* the profession and its future, not wanting to unravel or dissolve it into its component parts. So these 'pro-vocations' should always have as their ultimate focus the need to strengthen, clarify and deepen the participants' sense of the purpose and effectiveness of social work in the 21st century. Their sense of vocation should be brought to the surface by this exercise.

## Provoking and re-imagining Provocation — how?



The most appropriate provocation for RISW is a four-quadrant development map, outlining four narratives of growth for social work – either the profession in general, or a specialism within it.



The closing stage of Framing and Mapping introduces participants to a basic explanation of the Four Quadrants, at a very general level. Here, session leaders will use the 4Q's – Person, People, Practice, Policy – to interpret the data generated by the previous stages and sessions, and turn them into 'development lines'.



Simply put, these aim to show the participants' sense of how social work should develop itself, now and into the future:

- What are the values, practices, policies and mentalities that begin the identity of social work and then allow it progressively expand and grow?
- How does social work evolve as a profession and as a discipline?

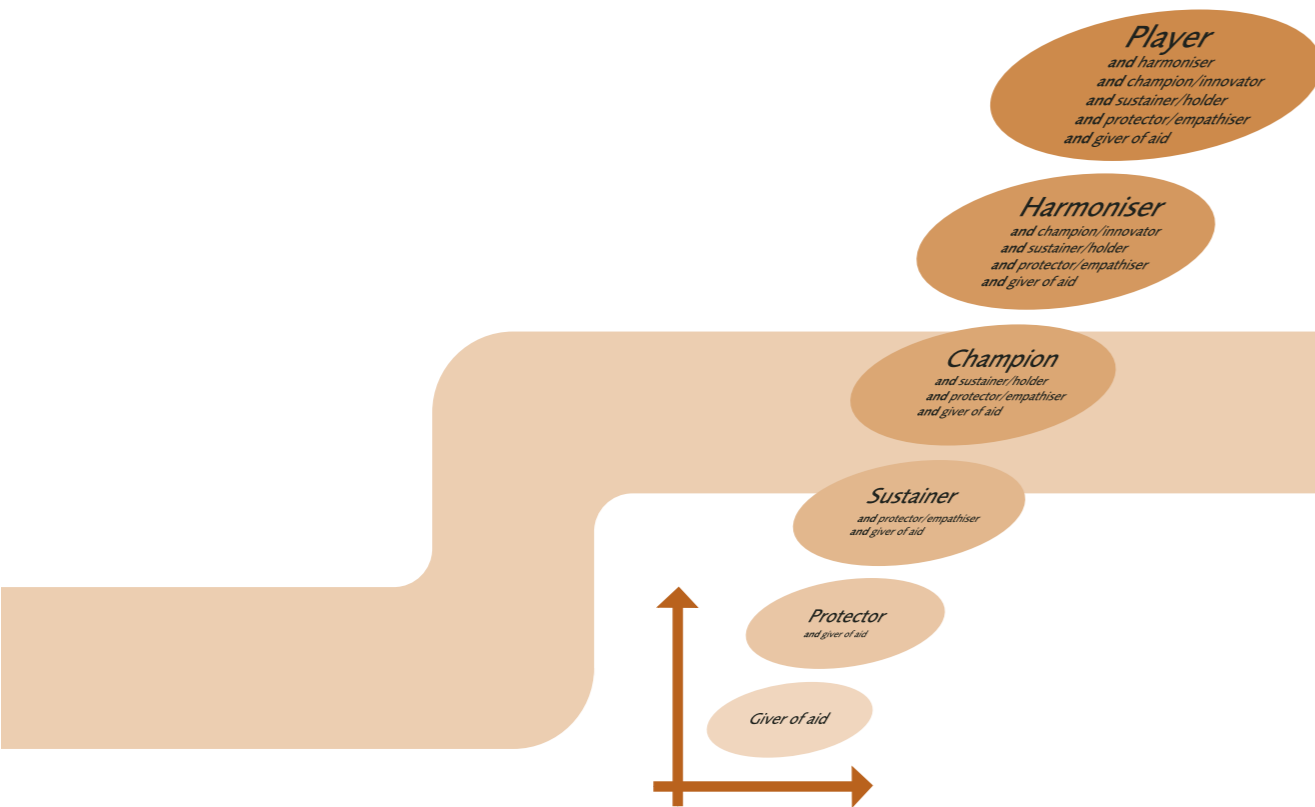


If we understand that sequence of evolution clearly enough, what possibilities for new developments might open up in each of the quadrants?

- The next bold step is to see whether each of these stages of development might correlate with the other. The Provocation could start the process of seeing a genuine 'new integrity' for social work – by noting how developments in each of these quadrants might support or not support the others.

### Laying out the material

Session leaders may find it useful to precede their 4Q provocation with a series of headlines from the existing material, the ones which – in their opinion – demonstrate the 'imagining' of the participants. The headlines can roughly follow the sequence of the stages and exercises. It is also useful to briefly note from what specific exercise each headline comes from, in the Powerpoint/other graphical representation. This gives participants an instant sense of ownership of the final results.



**How to compose a development line**

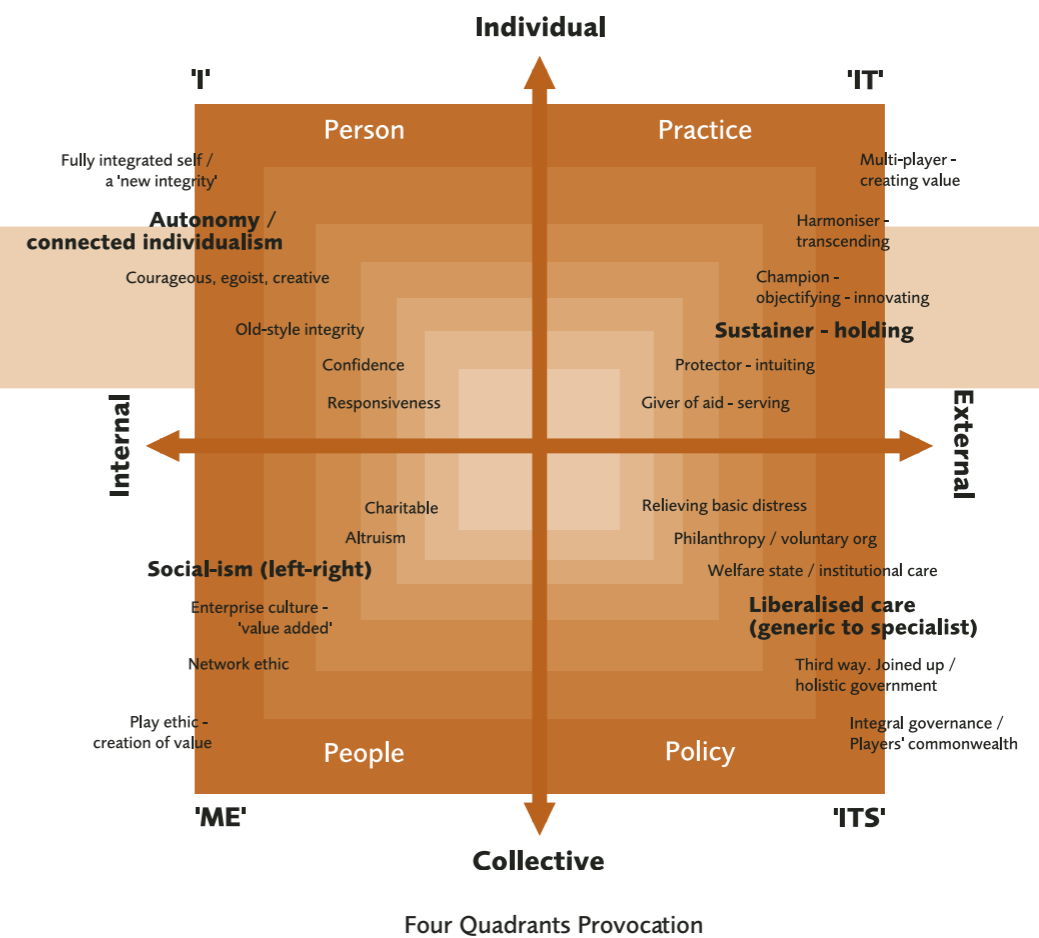
As the Core Ideas section on the Four Quadrants explains (see 'Lines of Development' pp41-43) each of the lines can be understood as a **holarchy** rather than a **hierarchy** of elements. This is not one development as crudely *superior* to another, discarding, down-grading or suppressing the previous elements. Instead each development is *essential* to the building of the next level, the new level consciously aware of and managing all the elements that have come before. It's like the relation of biological levels in a body (from molecule, to cell, to organ...), or the stages of child psychology. In both, sequences of development are clearly necessary for the growth and health of organism and mind.

But faced with the mass of data generated by our games and frames – stories, scenes, phrases, concepts, abstractions, graphics – how do we start to build our holarchies/lines of development in each quadrant?

The session leaders must remember that this is intended to be a provocation, so no-one should be inhibited by the idea that these need to be 'accurate' or 'exact'. Yet there will be keywords or images that resonate throughout the participants' material, which lend themselves to being at least placed within their relevant quadrants.

Once that is done, the task is to imagine at what level in the development line this keyword or key-concept exists. We build that line by imagining both what previous levels might have brought about this level, and what future levels might emerge from the current one.

The diagram opposite is an example from a RISW creative session, where a 4Q provocation was attempted. The keywords are highlighted extra bold: the rest of the levels are derived from the session leaders' reading of the participants' material.



We would recommend that session leaders make their tour round the development lines in each quadrant in no more than five to six minutes – long enough to state their case, short enough to allow it to stick in the minds of participants, and thus allow them to respond effectively. Again, it's important to stress that these are both provocations – to spark response and comment – and 'pro-vocations' – interventions that are trying to imagine a positive future for the social work profession and ethos.

By the end of this session there should be a tumult of ideas about social work's future development, all of which should be marked on or around the Provocation. This may well end up looking chaotic – but it will be a sign of the thinking developed over the session. It should be photographed or video-ed, to be emailed later to participants.

**Scenario fever**

There may be participants who wish to take a clean run at their own scenarios for social work, perhaps even using their own paradigms and frameworks, or other ideas they've brought to the process. They pursue that as a creative option in the following session, as one possible 'New Narrative'.

## Provoking and re-imagining New narratives — why?



In many ways, this is the moment we have all been waiting for!

Having witnessed the facilitators' 'provocation', the participants now have a chance to let their own imaginations go and play with the possibilities for themselves as social workers, as well as for social work itself, in the future.



This Re-imagining should, as far as possible, take the form of new narratives. That is to say, participants should avoid making single, isolated gestures at a new reality for social work, but should try to build coherent and contextualised visions. It will not be enough to say: 'Mary will be more capacious, a better listener, more able to respond.' These words will only register in the consciousness as exhortations to 'be more, be better', and may only add to the current pressures.



Consider each new ideal – be it a quality or a new idea for practice or policy – and build a story around it. The stories do not necessarily have to be elaborate dramas, but can borrow details from ordinary life and be entirely recognisable to the participants. The important thing is that they are enjoyable and inspiring stories, and not commands or prescribed formulas.



Why wait for the right story to appear in the press – or any other cultural media - when you yourself could be the author? In many ways, the various stages of RISW can serve as a preparation or 'training course' for this kind of creative action – immersing workers in culture, encouraging them to develop a 'consciousness about their consciousness', introducing them to challenging new frameworks, and even encouraging them to communicate with the pundits! Now comes an opportunity for them to fully and confidently express this freshly stimulated imagination.

The potential benefits for the individual social worker are:

- Stories can be built on the outcomes of the RISW process. That is to say, they can be targeted on, and informed by, the immediate concerns of social workers.

- Participants can own the stories. This will allow them to continue developing them after the sessions.
- Participants are free to be wildly imaginative, in the emotional space that RISW provides, without any fear of loss of credibility.
- Most importantly, stories will be whole, taking into account all Four Quadrants of human experience.

Successful and productive Re-Imagining sessions, generating rich new narratives, can do much to encourage and energise social workers by:

- Creating a new mental and emotional backdrop for their daily tasks: helping them to feel they are significant actors in the drama of social work.
- Increasing their sense of agency: rather than accept the media's uninformed version of an event, they will have a new capacity to feel empowered to write their own narratives, getting the story right in all its complexities.
- Establishing new paradigms of development in their thinking: placing an incident in the context of a narrative which explains the dynamics between all the players and where the ending is yet to be written, developing their capacity to recognise how practice could have been better.
- Helping them to feel empathy for the roles of other actors in their dramas: for example, policy-makers, the interested and the disinterested public, and service users.
- Giving them hope: once they have acknowledged the possibility of a better articulated self, they can begin to imagine coping with challenges and obstacles in a more confident way.
- Offering them an opportunity to own their own futures: social workers can begin to proactively offer ways forward for their own, and the profession's, future development.

## Provoking and re-imagining New narratives — how?



The act of re-imagining social work will have four foci, reflecting the four quadrants. These might be taken one at a time, or they might be taken as parts of a whole. That is to say, participants can spend their time examining one of the quadrants in order to carefully consider what the stages of development in that quadrant might be. This can be a very important process, particularly if some members of the group are still unsure of the 4 quadrants or the principle of development.



Alternatively, participants can take a broader sweep and, taking all Four Quadrants into account, can begin to imagine a new future for social work as a whole. This is particularly appropriate for those members of the group who are naturally Big Picture thinkers – not everyone is! Ideally, if you have time, all participants should have the opportunity to work at both levels.



Data gathered from the earlier sessions can provide starting points for all the exercises below.



### Exercise 1

These exercises are most enjoyable and fruitful if carried out in groups of up to five people.

- **Person quadrant:** if you have come to some understanding of your self – your capacities, strengths and weaknesses, limitations and areas of most rapid development – begin by articulating what stage you are at in your personal development and see if you can arrange your qualities in a developmental line.

For example, are you:

- Able to help with physical tasks?
- Able to assess physical needs?
- Able to sit and listen to care users?
- Able to hear the sub-text of care users' needs while in conversation?
- Able to draw out care users? ... etc.

## Re-imagining : New narratives — how?

Next, imagine how else you could be. Can you imagine a self that is a development from the self you are now? **In order to reach that new self, and to make it as authentic as possible for you, try to tell a story that would illustrate the new self in action.**

- **Practice quadrant:** how would you describe the development of social work practice? What do you feel are the key stages in responsibility? Do you feel that as you progress in your career, gaining competence and experience, the tasks you are asked to fulfil capitalise on your growth?

Begin by trying to describe what stage you are at with your professional practice. If there are many different levels of practice represented in the group of people you are working with, see if you can draw a line to connect the levels.

Next, using what you know about your own personal development and capacities, try to extend that line to describe how you think your job, and its tasks, should progress.

For example:



- Care assistant following set rules.
- Member of team working together to achieve set tasks.
- Team leader assessing strength and weaknesses of individual members to fit the tasks.
- Manager with armslength responsibility for team's performance, answerable to district leaders.

For example, the questions you might ask yourself include: is there a disjunct here? Would you develop the responsibility differently? Is there enough room for the manager's creativity and use of experience to date? ... etc

*An alternative line of development: less vertical and hierarchical, more horizontal and network-like – might be:*



- Social work graduate specialising in child protection.
- Team leader in small child protection unit.
- Experienced specialist training in integral studies.
- Manager in a social work head office.
- Portfolio career professional mixing organisational consultancy and direct front-line practice.

**As in the previous exercise, think of a story which would illustrate this developed practice well.**

- **People quadrant:** what are the key structures and values that are common to all the people involved in this exploration – the culture of the workplace or the society within which the culture operates? Begin by identifying where you are now, then try to work backwards, to see how it has developed to reach this point. That will help you to imagine how to move forwards with culture. For example, if the culture has been hierarchical and materialistic, try to imagine what might represent a development of that. Where do values such as inclusiveness, support, community and play get factored in?



Can you create a new social work story to illustrate this?

- **Policy quadrant:** What are the defining policies of social work at present – those which are most significant or setting the tone for social work practice? How have they changed in recent history? Can you explain how and why the new policies have been a development of previous ones? If you feel they are not developmental but are remaining true to a pre-determined outcome, explain what the benefits are for all those who might be affected? Try to answer from the point of view of the policy-maker as well as that of the social worker.

Now, what new policies can you imagine that would (a) make a good development from the current policies and (b) be a departure from the current line of development? With the latter, see if you can make clear stepping stones from the current policies to your ideal ones. Is there a story you can imagine that would illustrate how such a policy might work effectively?

At the end of this session, invite your groups to role-play some of the stories they have come up with to illustrate the developments they have imagined.

### Exercise 2

Again, these sessions are best carried out in groups of up to five people.

This exercise encourages participants to look at how the whole picture of social work might develop. There are at least two possible ways of doing this (A and B below), but your participants may come up with creative ideas of their own.

#### A: Re-writing popular culture:

- Choose one of the film/television scripts from page 54. Conduct a Four Quadrant analysis of the scene as illustrated in 4Q How on p93.
- Try to plot a simple development line in each of the four quadrants as above, illustrating how things might develop on all fronts.
- Using the characters from this script and a similar setting, re-write the script to reflect your suggestions for development in all quadrants.
- Invite each group of participants who took Option A to role-play this script for the others.
- Invite the others to comment on the ideas illustrated: can anyone imagine an even greater development of this script, introducing new concepts and complexities?

#### B: Re-imagining Social Work:

- Using the data gathered in the Exploring and Playing sessions, preferably mapped out onto a Four Quadrant template (as explained on pages 93-99), discuss and confirm how you see the possibilities for future development in all Four Quadrants.
- Develop a story line which illustrates as many of the developments as possible. Don't be too concerned if not all your ideas can fit into one story.
- Write a short script for the story, up to five minutes in total. Don't avoid including high drama – it will be all the more memorable.
- Invite the group to act out their drama without giving initial information about their intentions.
- Invite the audience to see if they can identify and articulate the intended developments in each quadrant. Can they make any further suggestions?

#### C: Using your creativity:

- Some people will want to take up the Re-imagining challenge in a different way. This could take a variety of communication formats – everything from a Powerpoint presentation to haiku poems, to a series of maxims or a short story. The participants must feel that it is the most appropriate and lasting expression of their re-imagined sense of social work. This provides a tangible 'take-home' for all participants – an example (and perhaps a talisman) of their 're-imagination' in action.

#### By the end of this session, participants will have:

- experienced the freedom to assess the current problems of social work, both through their own perspective and that of others
- drawn on their own developed consciousness to re-imagine a future for social work in all Four Quadrants
- created memorable new narratives for social work which will stay with them in the course of their daily tasks
- shared this experience with others – an important part of the process which helps to legitimise the process and confirm the internal shifts that have taken place.



## Policy focus

By Pam Fenton.



### Using the RISW process as a tool for developing the scope and capacity of social work

The final stage nominates a specific policy or aspect of policy and works it through a Four Quadrant analysis. In so doing, the participants will be able to:

- Identify the range of internal capacities required to execute the policy. How will these be generated?
- Identify a sliding scale of professional activities and practices that constitute the policy and match them to the range of capacities noted above.
- Consider what the cultural conditions (i) within social work and (ii) in the public sphere need to be to ensure the success of this policy.

In addition, the participants will look at the spirit of the policy in terms of the core ideas of RISW – in particular, social play. Is this policy open and risky enough?

The effect of this will be to open an imaginary dialogue between the policy-makers and those expected to execute the policy. (It is ideal if representatives of both parties are present, but not essential.)

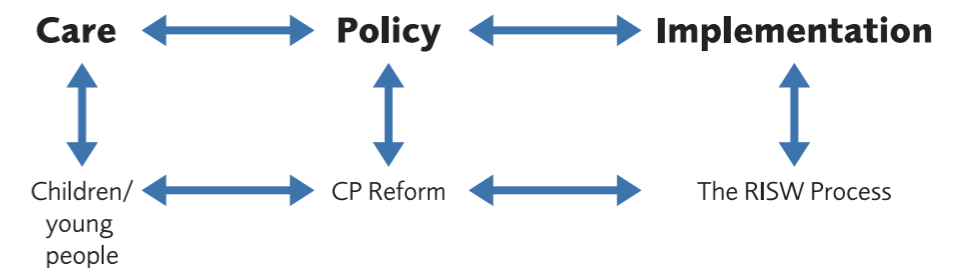
Based on their findings, participants will then recommend concrete ideas for how this policy can be enacted.

#### Policy Focus – Application

**Sample:** Child Protection Reform Programme

**Theme:** A learning journey

**Task:** Improving capacity



#### Objectives of the Policy:

To provide better:

- early support to children and families
- direct help to children in need of protection
- effective continuing support to children and families

#### Key Outputs required:

Improved identification of children at risk.

Better quality of work through:

- training
- linked information systems
- assessment
- shared responsibility
- streamlined procedures and bureaucracy
- more time freed up for frontline work
- enhanced skills



#### Guidance on how to run sessions, as part of an overall re-imagining initiative:

- Convene an inter-agency group of staff who regularly work together in CP services.
- Present brief outline of the Policy – Child Protection Reform Programme (written information on the Policy would be sent out in advance).
- **Stage 1:** Explain the Four Quadrants of social work and the integral approach, plus other core ideas of RISW.
- **Stage 2:** Explore and feed back from the earlier session, with the single agency group on social work roles and tasks presenting the Four Quadrants materials, adding in examples from other RISW sessions, see [www.reimaginingsocialwork.org](http://www.reimaginingsocialwork.org)
- **Stage 3:** Use this as the starting point for the inter-agency session. Use some RISW tools, such as Cultural Narratives and Consciousness Games, to allow participants to address their own governing narratives.
- **Stage 4:** Present Policy objectives and the key outputs to be addressed.
- Use this session to re-imagine a new way of informing, influencing and delivering on these objectives, unencumbered by existing and perceived barriers and blockages.
- Complete a new interagency framework for 're-imagining' the CP Reform programme implementation, using information from a review and discussion of the general material as applied to child protection and the reform programme.

## What do you need for Re-imagining?

### 1: Materials/Resources

**Location:** Preferably somewhere beyond the usual conference environments and definitely not within the existing workplace. Cultural venues like art galleries, creative centres and theatres are best. Other than that, choose venues that are in a rural or natural setting, where there is the opportunity for relaxation or contemplation between sessions – country house hotel, etc.

**Session spaces:** Preferably large and open plan, with moveable chairs and desks that can easily be grouped, and with as much natural light as possible. The workbook guides you as to the group sizes for each of the exercises. Ideally, the room(s) used should be large enough to accommodate breakout spaces in the same room. The sessions are energised by the noise and creative buzz in the atmosphere.

**Food and drink:** lots of water, fruit and energy foods.

### Technology: *Essentials*

- Display screen with PC projector. For displaying Powerpoint, and showing film and media material from DVDs, a powerful lap-top or PC is essential. (A separate DVD unit is preferable.) For showing material from television, a video recorder with large TV display attached is also necessary. Make sure that there is adequate amplification for sound at the computer in particular – minimum requirements would be two effective home stereo speakers, but professional room amplification is preferable.
- A digital still camera and/or digital video camera should also be available, to record crucial diagrams and models made by participants, and also to capture key presentations by participants. These can be used as reference material for session leaders or memoirs of the event for participants.
- Four small handheld recorders (cassette tape versions will do) to record story telling sessions (if groups agree to recording).
- Photocopier available for use – to allow for rapid copying of material.



#### Technology: *Optionals*

A RISW session would ideally have broadband and always-on internet access, available both at this computer, and at another terminal. This may provide a resource for groups working on exercises at various stages of the Re-imagining process.

#### Creative materials

A full range of expressive options should be available to participants

#### For all exercises

Large display panels (four), flipboards (four), rolls of art paper (no less than a metre wide), pens and markers of many colours, cards in many shapes (squares, rectangles, ovoids, etc), fixing materials.

#### 2. Duration

Ideally, each of the four stages in a Re-imagining session takes a day (9.30am – 4.00pm). The usual brunch breaks (20 minutes), lunch breaks (60 minute) and mid-afternoon breaks (20 minutes) apply.

The preferred frequency of the sessions is one a week, on the same day, over four weeks. A fortnight should be the longest stretch between sessions. This allows for a few days of reflection on, and perhaps even application in practice of, each previous stage's ideas. Alternative frequencies can include a full four-day session, or two sessions of two days spread out.

#### 3. Flexibility

Those familiar with the material will become confident at using parts of the workbook to suit their particular purpose at any given time. For example, Section 4 suggests that an interagency Re-imagining event be convened using materials from the full workshops and weaving them into an interactive session focusing on the chosen policy or new guidance. The exercises in Exploring and Playing and Framing and Mapping could be used to consider and explore

policy directives in an open-ended and consensual way. The storytelling exercises are useful as 'ice breakers' and for sessions exploring the approaches of the different professionals and agencies represented.

In addition, the conversations in the *Secrets and Lies* tapes could be used to explore relationships between service users and social workers.

We would also encourage you to think creatively about the use of the materials with teams and units as tools for:

- ongoing staff development
- peer group support
- influencing and implementing local and national policies
- mediation between groups or agencies who have divergent views on particular issues

These and other scenarios, which we leave to your newly-reawakened creative and energised imagination, could be addressed in specially-convened, focused Re-imagining sessions of your choice.

## Concluding the beginning



To write a conclusion for the process of Re-imagining could easily be seen as a contradiction in terms.



If it has been effective with participants, then the process will have instilled a professional confidence, curiosity, energy and initiative. From this point onwards, they will think sceptically about the idea of anything in their environment ever having a 'conclusion': nothing should be done and dusted, beyond discussion or inquiry, not open or up for grabs. Instead, they will have the tools – and hopefully the desire – to seek out possibility and opportunity at every stage of their professional lives.



For social workers in particular, the challenge of re-imagining their profession is to connect their *internal renewal* with their *external definitions*.



Internally, it is clear that so many of social work's enduring qualities – its resources of compassion, tireless commitment, willingness to see the potential in people – are highly valuable skills. Moreover, these skills are practised and refined daily, in often hugely demanding circumstances.

These evident qualities of social work have not yet proven strong enough in themselves to maintain the confidence of the profession, in the face of its seemingly incessant crises. Social work's sense of integrity, its mission and purpose have needed to be re-addressed. The change implied by such a new integrity would be a much more vibrant and pro-active connection to the world beyond social work than before. This is where the external definitions of social work matter – the deeply-rooted narratives that shape the media and public responses to social work crises and which shape the social worker perspective and practice.

There is a much deeper question than that of 'effective PR' versus 'journalistic cynicism'. Social work and social workers should be informing and guiding a much wider discussion – that of 'who cares?'

and 'who should care?' in this complex 21st century society. This question is being addressed by the full spectrum of public, private and voluntary institutions, in education, health, social enterprise and the police. All of them are ever more willing to see that problems like youth crime, the demographic explosion of older citizens, child protection and immigration require joined-up solutions across professions and sectors.

For social work, this is a great opportunity to restore the status and share the wisdom of the profession among other professions and the wider society. The experience of social work should be a resource not just for its own practice, but for many others interested in social exclusion. A confident social work will be able to make those inputs into policy and practice across the spectrum of services – if it can exercise its imagination, its unique take on the world, and express it in the relevant arenas with vigour and clarity. RISW will have been its own unique catalyst in that necessary process.

*To experience a broad spectrum of views, and to continue the RISW process, please visit the website <http://www.reimaginingocialwork.org>*

We move from part to whole and back again. And in that dance of comprehension, we come alive to meaning, to value and to vision. The very circle of understanding guides our way, weaving together the pieces, healing the fractures, lighting the way ahead.

Ken Wilber

The Four Quadrants: Agency - Acting with the big picture always in mind



We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.

Anais Nin

The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.

Henri Bergson

There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

Edith Wharton

To be playful is not to be trivial or frivolous, or to act as though nothing of consequence will happen. On the contrary, when we are playful with each other we relate as free persons, and the relationship is open to surprise: *everything* that happens is of consequence.

James Carse



## Footnotes

- 1 <http://www.bartleby.com/61/26/10042600.html>
- 2 <http://www.goertzel.org/dynapsyc/1999/Being.htm>
- 3 [http://www.culture.com.au/brain\\_proj/CONTENT/VAIDYA.HTM](http://www.culture.com.au/brain_proj/CONTENT/VAIDYA.HTM)
- 4 <http://archive.salon.com/it/feature/1998/11/20feature2.html>
- 5 [http://www.harcourtbooks.com/authorinterviews/bookinterview\\_damasio.asp](http://www.harcourtbooks.com/authorinterviews/bookinterview_damasio.asp)
- 6 For an introduction to the health / consciousness connection see Maurice Dongier, 'Consciousness, Health and Well-Being: A Transdisciplinary Approach', available from the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, at [http://www.chsrf.ca/docs/finalrpts/hidg\\_e.shtml](http://www.chsrf.ca/docs/finalrpts/hidg_e.shtml). For education, see Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind* (Simon and Schuster)
- 7 For Caroline's book: *Consciousness Overload*: <http://archive.salon.com/books/feature/2001/09/20/knapp/>
- 8 Trying to pin down the nature and meaning of those changes can be very controversial. For example, claims from 'evolutionary psychology' - that our biological natures inevitably condition and limit our ability to morally and ethically develop - are bitterly contested within the scientific community, and beyond. (see Andrew Smith, *The Darwin Wars*). There are other contending ideas - such as Robert Wright's utopian vision of a fully evolved consciousness, capable of fostering a healthy globalisation - which are very helpful for a long term view (Wright, Non-Zero).
- 9 For a definitive debate on this see <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-8-92-1007.jsp>
- 10 <http://www.mediate.com/articles/benjamin5.cfm>
- 11 <http://dir.salon.com/it/feature/1998/11/20feature.html>
- 12 Social work has a plethora of nationally and internationally formulated ethical codes. See the British Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, 1999 (<http://www.basw.co.uk/articles.php?articleid=2>). For more SW ethics codes, see US National Association of Social Workers 1999 Code of Ethics (<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>), or the Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics 1999, ([http://www.aasw.asn.au/adobe/about/Code\\_of\\_Ethics\\_2002.pdf](http://www.aasw.asn.au/adobe/about/Code_of_Ethics_2002.pdf)). All of these are in part derived from the International Federation of Social Workers' 1994 document 'The Ethics of Social Work: Principles and Standards' (<http://www.ifsw.org/Publications/4.4.pub.html#declaration>).
- 13 See 'A New Science of Qualities: A Talk With Brian Goodwin', at [Edge.org](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/goodwin/goodwin_p1.html)
- 14 Goodwin doesn't want to abandon traditional science - what he calls a 'science of quantities'. But he does want to supplement it with what he calls a 'science of qualities' - one attuned to these greater patterns, and sensitive to the way real, complex organisms (including humans) behave. For more on Goodwin's theories as they apply to organizations, see Reason, P., & Goodwin, B. C. (1999). Toward a Science of Qualities in Organizations: lessons from complexity theory and postmodern biology. *Concepts and Transformations*, 4(3), 281317. <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~mnsprw/Papers/sciencequalities.htm>
- 15 To continue the expansion of the terms of the model: these reduce the phenomena before us into measurable data. Reality is something that we are necessarily alienated from. We cannot get involved in, or implicated with what we are observing - otherwise our authority (based on 'hard' knowledge) becomes subverted
- 16 Jake Chapman, 'A Complex Adaptive System', *Health Service Review*, Issue 49 - September 2002 (<http://www.acca.co.uk/publications/hsr/49/618182>). See also Chapman, System Failure, Demos, 2002.
- 17 Chapman suggests that most policy initiatives are trying to 'throw a bound and weighted bird' - the bird being the culture, practices and mentalities of an organisation or sector. How might one let the bird go, and have it reach an intended destination? Maybe place some feed in the right place, suggests Chapman. Or perhaps train the bird by sensitively relating to the animal, answering its desire for both exciting competition and steady nurturance. In terms of our different models of knowing, this means respecting the subjective reality of the bird. It is given its own autonomy to choose its own route, towards goals that both bird and fancier have agreed to.
- 18 The essential analysis of the work ethic comes from Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. A useful contemporary update is Richard Donkin's *Blood Sweat and Tears*.
- 19 6.5 million working days lost to work related stress or depression; one in seven adults off work for at least six months due to illness or injury; and a cost of £11 billion a year to employers. In the public sector, employees are

- five times more likely to be off sick than in the IT sector. Stephen Bevan, *Attendance Management* (Work Foundation, 2003). See <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/newsroom/pressreleases.jsp?ref=107>. Also Bevan, 'Sickness Absence: a Cost Worth Managing', at <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/news/126art1.php>
- 20 With recreational and cultural spending now outstripping what we spend on food and housing, and our enormous levels of credit card debt (trebling in the last seven years), we are clearly seeking our diversions and entertainments ever more avidly. Is this just the inevitable result of near-full employment - more people with more money in pockets? Or might it indicate, to some degree, a desire to compensate for the lack of satisfaction experienced in most organisations and workplaces? See National Survey's 'Components of Household Expenditure 2001-2002' at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=6228>: Sarah Crown, 'Millions struggle to repay credit card debt', *Guardian*, August 8, 2003. <http://money.guardian.co.uk/creditanddebt/creditcards/story/0,1456,1014928,00.html>
- 21 The aspirations are noble: one government definition about work-life balance describes it as 'adjusting work patterns so that everyone regardless of age, race or gender can find a rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work and their other responsibilities and aspirations'. See TUC's Working Life site, particularly Dr Jane Pillinger, 'Work/life balance: findings new ways to work', at [http://www.tuc.org.uk/work\\_life/tuc-4022-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/tuc-4022-f0.cfm)
- 22 See American Heritage Dictionary, <http://www.bartleby.com/61/roots/IE112.html>
- 23 For more on these 'seven rhetorics of play', please visit The Play Ethic website (<http://www.theplayethic.com>), and Brian Sutton-Smith's *The Ambiguity of Play* (Harvard, 1997) Macmillan will publish a book by Pat Kane, *The Play Ethic: Living Creatively in the New Century*, in June 2004, where these ideas will be extended.
- 24 Before going any further, we should recognise that to emphasise the forms of play available to any profession, sector or organisation is to presume one core reality: that most employees in the developed Western societies (other than the deliberately exploited) exist at a level far above scarcity and deprivation. With education and IQ levels constantly on the rise, in societies throughout the world, and technological productivity allowing 'ever more to be done with ever less', we have the opportunity and resources available to us to forge new ways to produce and serve, and to collaborate and create, in our public and private lives. We can more readily experiment in how we do things because we are far distant from the kind of socio-economic scarcity that punishes risk-taking and innovation. Often we only need a basic mental re-adjustment to see this - 'what we have made, we can unmake and remake'. Yet it is a shift which can be difficult to undergo, in the midst of the usual organisational murkiness and intractability. The Play Ethic, as a component of 'Reimagining' in general, is an attempt to help people make that shift.
- 25 See <http://www.theplayethic.com/pages/873319/index.htm>
- 26 See <http://www.theplayethic.com/pages/550653/index.htm>
- 27 See <http://www.theplayethic.com/pages/873324/index.htm>
- 28 Ken Wilber is an American proponent of 'integral' thinking. Integral thinking aims to map all existing paradigms of natural and social science, spirituality and culture, to help us begin to live in a 'world-centric' civilization. The best introduction to his work is *A Theory of Everything: An integral vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality* (Gateway, 2002).
- 29 See Wilber, *ibid*. Also see Arthur Koestler, *Ghost in the Machine*, 1967
- 30 See for example the 2001 Department of Health paper, 'Perceptions of Social Work and Social Care', available from the Re-imagining Social Work website (<http://www.reimagingsocialwork.org>) For shifts in the perception of social workers since the 80's see Peter Hetherington, 'Age of Enlightenment', *Guardian*, May 21 2003, <http://society.guardian.co.uk/socialcarestaff/story/0,1141,959873,00.html>
- 31 <http://www.imdb.com/SearchPlots?social+worker>
- 32 See Shona Main, 'Social Workers in the Soaps', on the RISW website (<http://www.reimagingsocialwork.org>). Also see 'Government goes from inept to adept on tv', *CS Monitor*, June 7, 2001, <http://search.csmonitor.com/durable/2001/06/07/p1s2.htm>. And though the research has to yet be properly done, there are vast amount of instances of social work in literature, drama, visual arts and poetry, all of which can be usefully examined. See, for example, Catherine Hiersteiner 'Saints or Sinners? The Image of Social Workers from American Stage and Cinema before World War I', *Affilia Journal of Women and Social Work* 13(3): 14-26, 1998. Max Siporin, 'Have You Heard the One About Social Work Humor?', *Social Casework* 65(8): 459-464, 1984

- 33 See the end of Marilyn Freeman's paper, 'Social Work in the Movies', for examples of how movies can be used in teaching and training moments for social workers. <http://www.aber.ac.uk/~jmcwww/Identact/Papers/paper57.doc>
- 34 In our Core Ideas section, both the 'Fear and Love Loops' and the '4 Quadrants' try to find a place for this kind of knowledge – offering up more capacious frameworks within which all aspects of the reality of a situation can be considered. 'Intuition' and 'hunch' are part of that realm of data which Brian Goodwin calls the 'Science of Qualities' – the new complement to our traditional Science of Quantities, that validates our subjective responses to the world, by reference to new sciences like complexity theory, biology and physics: 'I believe that there is a whole scientific methodology that needs to be developed on the basis of what is called the intuitive way of knowing. It's not something that's vaguely subjective and artistic, it's a definite way of knowing the world. In fact, it's absolutely essential to creative science. All the great scientists, Einstein, Feynman, you name them, would say intuition is the way they arrived at their basic insights, their new ways of putting parts together into coherent wholes. The famous guys are allowed to say this. The rest of us have to pretend that we're really basing everything on hard fact, proceeding to generalize by induction as Francis Bacon told us to, not seeing a new whole intuitively. What really interests me is the possibility of systematically cultivating this way of knowing.' Interview with Brian Goodwin, at [http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/goodwin/goodwin\\_p3.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/goodwin/goodwin_p3.html). However, we should note here, that, in social work – where lives are often at risk – intuition cannot be automatically 'factored in'. The issue of whether the intuition is right or not becomes far more relevant in social work because risks cannot be taken in the same way: someone could die as the result of a wrong 'hunch'. See notes below.
- 35 [our emphasis]. Other recent research on social work and intuition includes Jerry Floersch, *Meds, Money, and Manners: The Case Management of Severe Mental Illness* (Columbia University Press (2002)). See interview at <http://www.cwru.edu/pubs/cwrumag/fall2002/departments/explorations/intuition.shtml>. Luoma, B.B. (1998), 'An Exploration of Intuition for Social Work Practice and Education'. *Social Thought*, 18, 2, 31-45
- 36 Harry Ferguson, 'The Sixth Sense', *Guardian*, Jan 30, 2003. <http://society.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,7884,885514,00.html>
- 37 Eileen Munro from the London School of Economics has written extensively on intuition and analysis in social work, particularly child protection. She regards them as two mutually dependent ways of knowing the world that need to find an accommodation with each other: 'Rather than seeing analytic and intuitive reasoning as opposites, it is more realistic to view human reasoning skills on a continuum, with the purely formal, analytic methods at one end and blind intuition at the other. In between, intuitive reasoning can be more or less steered by structured guidelines, and analytic methods may rely, to varying degrees, on intuitive skills in collecting and organizing the necessary information. If we apply this to child protection, we can move away from the old debates, and instead explore the strengths and weaknesses of intuition and analytic thinking in different aspects of child protection work and consider how the two approaches can be integrated.' Munro provides excellent analysis of the 'false polarity' between analysis and intuition in social work practice – particularly her book, *Effective Child Protection* (Sage, 2002), and her article in the Berkeley School of Social Welfare Fall 2002 journal, 'Integrating Intuition and Analysis in Child Protection', available at [http://socialwelfare.berkeley.edu/socialwelfare\\_at\\_berkeley/SWAB\\_Fall\\_2002.pdf](http://socialwelfare.berkeley.edu/socialwelfare_at_berkeley/SWAB_Fall_2002.pdf)
- 38 See the business consultant and systems thinker Peter Senge: 'Very often, experienced managers have rich intuitions about complex systems, which they cannot explain. Their intuitions tell them that cause and effect are not close in time and space, that obvious solutions will produce more harm than good, and that short-term fixes produce long-term problems. But they cannot explain their ideas in simple linear cause-effect language. They end up saying, 'Just do it this way. It will work.'...The conflict between intuition and linear, nonsystematic thinking has planted the seed that rationality itself is opposed to intuition. This view is demonstrably false if we consider the synergy of reason and intuition that characterizes virtually all great thinkers. Einstein said, 'I never discovered anything with my rational mind.' He once described how he discovered the principle of relativity by imagining himself traveling on a light beam. Yet, he could take brilliant intuitions and convert them into succinct, rationally testable propositions.' Peter Senge, 'The Leader's New Work: Building Learning Organizations'. *Sloan Management Review*, 1990. For quotes, see <http://www.stewardshipmodeling.com/SD%20&%20leadership.htm#Leaders%20New%20Work>
- 39 On an 'intuition-literacy', see Jerry Floersch, *Meds, Money, and Manners: The Case Management of Severe Mental Illness* (Columbia University Press (2002)). See interview at <http://www.cwru.edu/pubs/cwrumag/fall2002/departments/explorations/intuition.shtml> And Luoma, B.B. (1998), 'An Exploration of Intuition for Social Work Practice and Education'. *Social Thought*, 18, 2, 31-45. Also available in Edward R. Canda, ed, *Spirituality in Social Work: New Directions* (Haworth, 1998)
- 40 Munro, 'Integrating Intuition and Analysis in Child Protection', *ibid.*
- 41 Exercise devised by Alison Gibson of Teamworks
- 42 See Steve Denning, *The Springboard how storytelling ignites action in knowledge era organizations* (Butterworth 2000): 'One reason why we live in a soup of narratives, why narratives permeate our lives and understanding, is that resorting to narratives is the way in which we have learned to cope with our world of enormously complex phenomena. Even while scientists and schoolteachers have been telling us to abandon these unscientific approaches, and adopt linear abstract thinking, the human race has used its common sense and stubbornly—to some extent surreptitiously—stuck with narratives as the most usable tool to cope with complexity. We have used the narrative language of stories as the most appropriate instrument to communicate the nature and shape and behaviour of complex adaptive phenomena. Stories capture the essence of living things, which are quintessentially complex phenomena, with multiple variables, unpredictable phase changes, and all of the characteristics that the mathematics of complexity has only recently begun to describe. The fact that narratives are not mathematically precise, and in fact are full of fuzzy qualitative relationships, seems to be a key to their success in enabling us to cope with complexity...' (p.112)
- 43 This form of story-telling usually means that participants have carefully prepared their story – and that the structure and texture of it will be worth retaining for the final publication outcome of the session. This means that recording stories for transcription, wherever possible, is preferable. Our simple method is to use a standard-cassette recorder as a kind of 'talking stick' – it sits in the speaker's lap and records their story, and is handed onto the next teller. (Make sure you have a backup machine and supplies of batteries and tapes!). It is very important that the choice to submit to recording is voluntary. Participants must be assured that these stories will be completely 'anonymised' when transcribed, and that the tellers will have the final editorial say – reading them when completed, able to make all and any amendments, and with the power to decide how these should be used.
- 44 With grateful acknowledgement to the story-telling work of Seth Kahan (<http://www.sethkahan.com>) and Steve Denning (<http://www.stevedenning.com>), and the IFF (<http://www.internationalfuturesforum.com>).
- 45 The overall effect of these complementary and overlapping framings, filled in with all the data from our previous session, is something like those famous David Hockney photo paintings, Hockney photographed a room, or a person, with a camera – but with thousands of smaller shots, layered onto a picture in a collage. Each shot showed a fragment of the whole scene, but all came together to portray a complex whole. Sometimes the photos zoomed in on details; sometimes the whole picture bent its perspective, so that the viewer could, impossibly, see round corners, or focus on a particular detail. For an example, see <http://www.santarosa.edu/art/art18/hockney.jpg>
- 46 See reports at <http://www.doh.gov.uk/scg/workforce/coi.htm>
- 47 See Bernie De Koven's website, Deep Fun (<http://www.deepfun.com>) for a wealth of information and thinking about the power of games and play to revitalize individuals and organizations.
- 48 The rising tide of 'mobile' computing devices – from smart phones and Palm Pilots to wireless laptops – is an opportunity for SW. A social worker could conceivably 'take their office with them', in a similar way to retail operations in the private sector (ticket collections swiping cards on trains, etc). The question of bringing together all the necessary information on a particular client could also be answered technologically, to a degree: graphic interfaces on screens could be connected to databases that show at a glance the status or progress of a client.
- 49 See Justin Hunt, 'Mobile suppliers counsel caution', *The Guardian*, 26 June 2003. <http://society.guardian.co.uk/internet/story/0,8150,984877,00.html>
- 50 Richard Sennett's *Respect: The Formation of Character in an Age of Inequality* is a fascinating exploration of the subtleties and paradoxes of the emotions of care services. For example: Could a consideration of respect be able to establish the appropriate distance between social worker and client which respects the autonomy of both – and in particular to the service user? Another emotion worthy of consideration is 'compassion'. We need to consider when 'compassion' might reduce the person who receives it. As Sennett says, if there is an element of pity, then the inequality between giver and receiver become painful and explicit. Finally, we could consider the value of 'empathy' in the SW relationship. If knowing by participation means engaging with a client's terms of reference, then at what point does 'empathizing' have the potential to shift towards 'challenging'? See <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,880828,00.html>

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Shona Main for her original inspiration in helping us conceive this project and her continuing support and enthusiasm for its potential. Shona's insightful essay on Social Work in Soap Operas can be seen on [www.reimagining-social-work.org](http://www.reimagining-social-work.org)

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