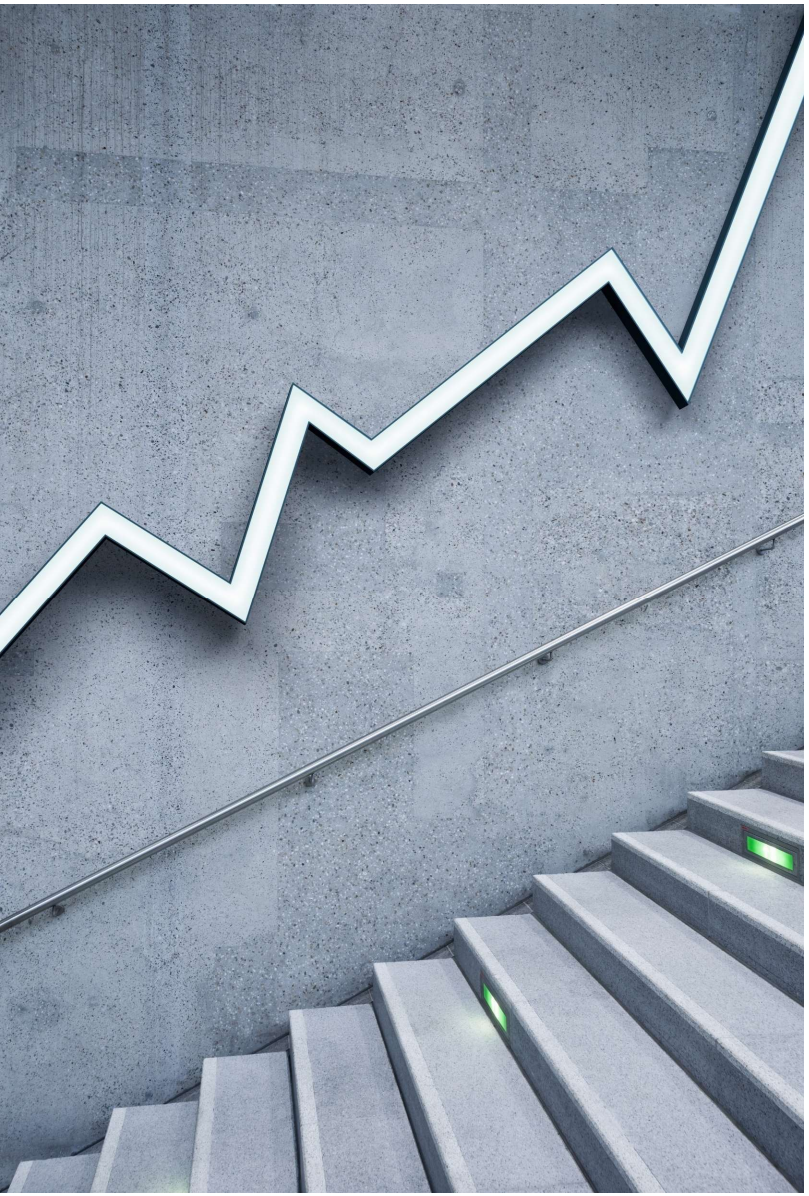


Social Policy

UK Citizens Advise Bureau Model

WATERLOO HUMAN SERVICES PLAN

MICHAEL SHREENAN

COUNTERPOINT COMMUNITY SERVICES INC

Social Policy work is:

- Addressing ‘bad’ rules and ‘poor’ practice

- Collecting evidence, understanding impact, suggesting solutions

- Issues tend be those that affect many, are repetitive and costly

- It about Quality improvement through addressing service delivery which is not optimal, reducing access barriers, and responding problematic emerging trends early

“DON'T GET INVOLVED IF YOU DON'T HAVE 30 YEARS TO DEVOTE TO SOCIAL POLICY!”

Checking the rules :
Will it pass the pub test?

- Is there something fundamentally wrong with the policy or procedure?
- Is there something wrong with how the policy or procedure is being implemented?
- Is there a policy or procedure in place that is being ignored?
- Is there a policy gap?
- Is there ambiguity?
- Is there discretion?
- Is there a safety net?

Rules can be
Fair or Unfair, Good or Bad

Unfair rules that affect people in society need to be changed.

There are three questions to ask when addressing bad rules:

1. Who makes the rule?
2. Why is it bad?
3. Who is it impacting and how ?

Knowing who makes the rule means you know who to approach to get things changed

Knowing why it is bad means you have reasons for wanting the rule changed

Why social policy work is important?

it can be hard to find time to catch your breath, let alone get involved in social policy work
So why bother?

- **It's good for clients:**
  Sometimes you can't solve a client's problem easily or quickly. But it can be encouraging to them to know that you are taking up the issues raised long after they've left.

- **It's good for the whole community:**
  Getting laws or policies changed helps not just individual clients but anyone in the community who has experienced the same problem.

- **It's good for case workers:**
  Successful social policy work means that your staff won't have to deal with clients with that problem again – good news for busy advisors and decision makers.

- **It is good for policy makers and service providers:**
  They benefit from feedback on ways to improve their service to the public – increasing their customer satisfaction.

Why social policy work is important?

it can be hard to find time to catch your breath, let alone get involved in social policy work
So why bother?

- **It's good for your Agency:**
  Success raises staff satisfaction, and your agencies profile within the community, it builds trust, attracting jaded clients and investment.

- **It works!**
  While you won't be successful in every case, social policy action does work

Remember
doing something is better than doing nothing,

even if you can't do everything!

Impartiality

Social Policy work needs to be based on client evidence and facts not our personal opinion

- We need to be impartial, open to all, and action is regardless of any subjective opinion as to whether or not the client is deserving.
- We provide independent information solely on the basis of its potential usefulness to the client, i.e. information will not be selected to conform to any particular point of view.
- Representations made on behalf of clients will faithfully attempt to express the client's personal intentions and points of view.

Social Policy Foundations

- Empowering individual and communities
- Citizen involvement in policy making process
- Equality and Inclusion
- Evidence-led and Impact-based
- Transparency: making private challenges public
- Working collaborative with others to reduce wicked issues

Social Policy

What does success look like?

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change in: ***Policy***

change in: ***Practice***

change in: ***Perception***

change in: ***Provision***

THE PROCESS

Client / Adviser

Social policy issue identified

- Access
- Administration
- Policy anomaly
- Service gaps
- Inconstancy
- Information gap

Feedback Form

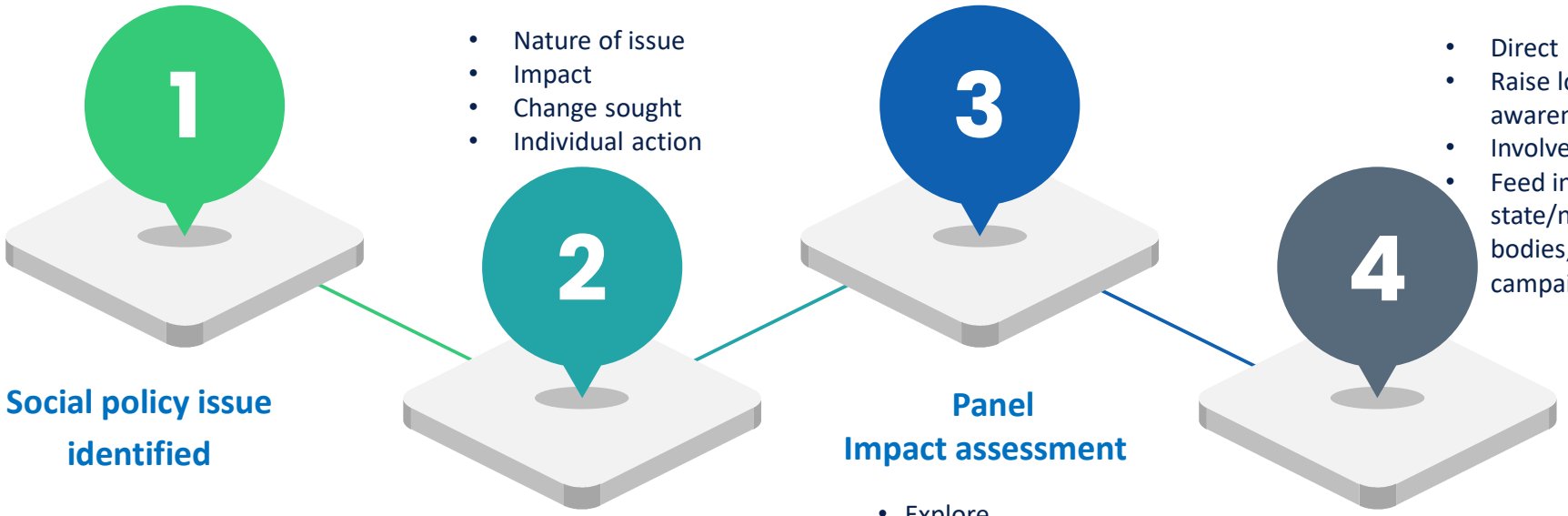
- Nature of issue
- Impact
- Change sought
- Individual action

Panel Impact assessment

- Explore
- Priorities
- Identify potential solutions
- Call for a change in *Policy, Practice, Provision,* or *Perception*

Decided Action/s

- Direct
- Raise local awareness
- Involve peaks
- Feed into state/national bodies, enquires or campaigns



Case evidence can now be searched and used to call for change

Social Policy Issues

ACCESS

- Communication gatekeeping
- Poor customer service
- Disability access
- Limited-service time / location
- Long waiting lists
- Digital only access

ADMINISTRATIVE

- Delays, backloads, errors in applications /appeals
- Poorly written public information
- Staff turn over and buck passing
- Poor application of discretionary powers
- No response or commitments not upheld

Social Policy Issues

INFORMATION GAPS

- Given in wrong format
- Given wrong information
- Not given enough
- Not given any

ANOMALIES IN POLICY

- Policy working for some but not others
- Rules or services that work for some but not others
- Services or provision are withdrawn by secondary policy or legislation
- Wrong interpterion /ambiguous policy

Social Policy Issues

GAPS

- Service provision available in some areas but not others
- Prescriptive Prioritisation leading to exclusion
- Inadequate resourcing
- No Lead responsibility

INCONSTANCIES

- Different decision or practice by different locality teams
- Inconsistent enforcement of rules
- Conflicting advice and information

Responsive Action

- Raise awareness
- Gathering evidence and researching and suggesting solutions
- Writing and distributing our evidence
- Using consultation processes to share with government agencies what our clients experience is
- Using our networks of contacts in the organisations to share what we know and raise awareness of issues
- Participating in and attending official government and parliamentary enquires
- Holding meetings with government officials
- Meeting and briefing politicians and influencing legislation
- Working with partners
- Resourcing training

Prioritising

- Volume of similar cases
- Impact / significance of case
- Costs of impact (both clients and providers)
- Easy /difficulty of change
- Local, State, National
- Resources and expertise required to action

Examples of changes

- Freephone numbers for Centrelink's claimants
- Non-solicitor organisations to access grant funding for the provision of legal advice / lay representation
- Changes to parking enforcement / Sheriff officers warrant sales
- Mortgage lenders – additional debt charges on compliant clients - revoked
- Change in written material (letters, leaflets)
- Changes to pre- paid power meters
- Fit for work assessments – benefits

Change In Policy ?

Examples

- Young adult seeking housing transfer on medical and social grounds however due to a local allocation policy relating to people with drug supply convictions is reluctant to apply. She doesn't want landlord to know about her error of judgment 4 years ago when she was caught with recreation drugs at a festival where she had drugs for her and her friends.
- Government agency decided all application now need to be processed online and no longer taking paper applications. This is problematic for those with digital access challenges.
- Supplement funds for rising energy costs are included in assessable income when it comes to rental support benefits leaving clients not better off.
- Volunteers of a government agency running a community centre are required to sign up to the same standard of conduct as paid staff, which included not making any public critical comments of said agency.

Change In Practice ?

Examples

- In Anti-Social Behavior cases community legal provider can only provide limited advice but no representation at NCAT . This is due to their impartiality principle on neighbor disputes and their stance on not supporting evictions, leaving some residents. without adequate support.
- Police officers patrol near needle exchange office to monitor for clients that have outstanding warrants
- Widowed pension with three teenage children hot water system malfunctions, due to contractor not having parts and lack of power supply client has to go without hot water for over a week
- Government agency commission research by a telephone survey however the provider does not have translators for the research project and therefore CALD communities' views are excluded from the results
- New energy provider salespeople coerces clients to switch providers without them understanding the contractual terms and also fail to then apply Senior’s Rebate because they are not a NSW Provider

Change In Perception ?

Examples

- Change in funding contract resulting in services selecting prescriptive funding streams, most of whom opted into Community Hub provision. There now a perception of lack of access to case management provision in particular suburb despite high demand. Funder due confidently will not release analyses.
- Centrelink and housing staff reported to be reluctant to provide advice/support to clients on how to fill the forms correctly or check them before the submitted for decisions as this might have liability issues for their staff therefore refer them to services not funded to respond.
- Police demand names of clients and other intelligence accessing an out of hours NGO youth support service
- Clients complains about exclusion because she was turned away from multicultural playgroup service, that had high demand waiting list, but said client was not from a CALD background
- Local clients on a social housing estate in Waterloo wittiness a high level of street cleaning service provision by local council within private complexes, (Meriton) but struggle to obtain same level of service on their estate.

Change In Provision ?

Examples

- Government agency faces funding cuts, resulting in NGO no longer being able to access previously provided translation services. Instead, they are supposed to meet the demand from their own funds, without increase to their funding.
- Due to the pandemic major shift in service provision moves most services online. However due to lack of digital literacy, devices and affordable Wi-Fi social housing tenants feel excluded
- Due to centralization to find efficiencies in government services, local offices are closed down, making access challenging for local clients.
- Clients accessing bulk billing psychology and counseling service are limited to 10+ free sessions despite needing longer intervention.