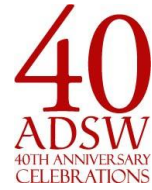


MEDIA RELEASE

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RESEARCH REVEALS ATTITUDES TO SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Research carried out by the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) has revealed differing perceptions about the range of social work services on offer in Scotland depending on personal experience. While two-thirds of those people whose families had used social services in the past two years rated them positively, almost half of all those surveyed felt unable to give any opinion.

The results, taken from a survey of 1000 people across Scotland, also show that those with experience of social services associate them mainly with care of older people and support for people with disabilities, but 36% of those respondents who had not used social services associated them mainly with child protection.

The research, carried out by Scottish Opinion, is published on the day (April 1) that the ADSW launches a campaign to improve understanding of social work services in Scotland.

A third of all respondents said that child protection was the service they most identified with social services (32%) followed by care of older people (28%). Only a small proportion of respondents in the research said that they most identified social services with key areas such as mental health (4%), criminal justice (3%) and early years (1%). ADSW believes that the public is often unaware of the breadth of social services activity, much of which goes unpublicised.

“It is clear that there is a great deal of goodwill toward social service workers but that there is also a lack of knowledge about the range of services we provide and the areas our work covers,” said ADSW president Alan Baird. “Through our campaign we hope to demonstrate how social services uses skilled staff to improve the lives of individuals, families and communities across Scotland.

“Social service workers are intent on helping people find their own solutions to problems, co-ordinating help across services to meet individual needs,” Alan Baird said. “We know that there are many thousands of people across Scotland whose lives have been improved through using social services, even as we recognise that some cases can cause heartbreak for all involved.

“We hope that by launching this campaign we can make people aware of the range of services provided through social work departments and show how they improve the well-being of Scotland as a whole.

“Our effectiveness depends to a significant degree on public awareness and confidence in our work,” added Alan Baird. “It is also important to staff morale and motivation – and ultimately recruitment.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

- 1) The research was carried out by Scottish Opinion Ltd. with 1000 Scottish adults over 18 using computer aided telephone interviewing (CATI). The sample is weighted to be representative of the Scottish population by age, gender, social grade and region. The interviews were carried out over 5 days from Tuesday February 17th.
- 2) Respondents were asked to rate social work services on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was very low and 10 very high. Of the overall sample 43% were unsure. Of the remaining 57%, 65% rated social work service 6 to 10 and 35% 1 to 5. Among individuals who had either used social work services themselves or their family had within the last two years, 70% rated the services positively (6-10) and only 6% felt unable to express a view. Of those who had not experienced social work services 49% felt unable to express a view.
- 3) When asked which service respondents most identified with social work the results were:
 - Child Protection: 32%
 - Care of older people: 28%
 - Supporting families: 14%
 - Support for disabled people: 7%
 - Mental health: 4%
 - Criminal justice: 3%
 - Early years: 1%
 - None of the above: 2%
 - Unsure: 8%
- 4) According to Government statistics the breakdown of social work staff numbers to service area is:
 - 60% of staff work in adult services (includes work to support those with mental health needs, learning disabilities, substance misuse. Also care for older people including those in care homes or requiring home care)
 - 17% of staff work in children's services (includes protection, adoption and fostering and family support)
 - 8% of staff work in criminal justice (includes probation and community service)
 - 6% work in generic social work
- 5) Staff numbers divide into the following work areas:
 - strategic/central 16%
 - fieldwork 39%
 - residential 29%
 - daycare 13%
 - homecare 4%