

The Social Work Evidence Bank: deposits and withdrawals for accountable practice

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Background & Purpose: Social work practitioners often struggle to articulate the evidence or information bases from which they practice. This makes it difficult for them to demonstrate their accountability to employers and service users. Since 2012 successive cohorts of social work students on placement in our health network have been tasked with identifying and analysing existing evidence for the specific interventions their supervisors nominate. In 18 months more than 45 systematic reviews and meta analyses have been collected and made available to practitioners. We will describe the strategies we have put in place to (a) build this growing evidence bank, and (b) assist in the translation of evidence into practice. Addressing conference theme: we will describe the Evidence Base Bank Initiative in our health service, addressing the theme of pathways to accountable social work research and practice. Summary of main points: The Evidence Base Bank Initiative has four purposes: (i) to engage students on placement in uncovering evidence for particular social work interventions in health; (ii) to educate the next generation of social workers on the value of and expectation that they will be practicing from an evidence base; (iii) to make available to social work practitioners current evidence supporting their practice, (iv) to develop strategies to assist practitioners in using the research evidence in their practice.. Conclusions & implications: we will discuss the outcomes of this initiative in relation to students' and social workers' satisfaction, and the ways in which social workers have made use of the Bank in researching, shaping and critiquing their practice. The Evidence Base Bank project illustrates one pathway towards demonstrating social work practitioners' accountability to employers and service users.