

# TOWARDS STANDARDS FOR QUALITY COMMUNITY WORK

## AN ALL IRELAND STATEMENT OF VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND WORK STANDARDS

### Knowledge, skills, qualities, values and practice principles that combine to form standards relating to community work practice<sup>1</sup>

The following outlines **some** of the knowledge, skills and qualities necessary for effective community work practice. The list is not exhaustive but does contain the core elements pertaining to the study and practice of community work.

| Essential knowledge includes:  | Essential skills include:   | Essential qualities include:   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The principles and processes of community work</li> <li>- Social policies and social theories</li> <li>- Governance, management &amp; organisational analysis</li> <li>- Public Administration</li> <li>- Group work theory, purpose &amp; processes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research &amp; observation</li> <li>- Communication, writing &amp; presentation</li> <li>- Working with people, empowerment &amp; activation</li> <li>- Reflective practice</li> <li>- Strategic planning</li> <li>- Leadership</li> <li>- Innovation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrity</li> <li>- Competence</li> <li>- Personal awareness</li> <li>- Empathy</li> <li>- Dependability</li> <li>- Sensitivity &amp; respect</li> <li>- Flexibility</li> <li>- Commitment to change, equality &amp; inclusion</li> <li>- Political consciousness &amp; environmental awareness</li> </ul> |

### Values and practice principles

#### Collective action

A focus on the collective means that the outcome sought should have a collective impact. Community work is based on working with groups of people, and supporting and enabling them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence so that they can develop an analysis, identify priority needs and issues and address these through collective action. In working with communities community workers have a responsibility to inform themselves about the

<sup>1</sup> The following information is adapted from a presentation prepared by the Community Workers Cooperative [www.cwc.ie](http://www.cwc.ie) for the regional seminars organised as part of the publication of the Standards document and from *Towards Standards for Quality Community Work, An All Ireland Statement of Values Principles and Work Standards 2008*

reality experienced by the communities with which they work and work towards collective outcomes for the community as a whole rather than the advancement of individuals.

### **Empowerment**

Community work is about the empowerment of individuals and communities, and addressing the unequal distribution of power. It is a process based on mutual respect, and equal and genuine partnership. It requires working with people to build an understanding and analysis of their reality through consciousness raising that creates the conditions for collective analysis of the issues affecting them and identifying ways to overcome. Community workers have a responsibility to be reflective and conscious of personal power and be prepared to challenge power imbalances in order to promote greater minority participation at all levels.

### **Social Justice**

Community work is based on a belief that every person and every community can play an active role in creating the conditions for a just and equal society, where human rights are promoted and all forms of oppression or discrimination are challenged. Community workers have a responsibility to develop a clear social analysis, making connections between local, national and global issues and to work in solidarity with marginalised communities towards gaining concrete improvements in their quality of life. The pursuit of social justice means developing an understanding of the ways in which the policies and activities of government, organisations and society create or contribute to disadvantage or work towards inclusion and equality.

### **Equality & Anti-Discrimination**

In working for equality, community workers must work from the starting point that while people are not the same, they are all of equal worth and importance and are therefore equally worthy of respect and acknowledgement. Community workers have a responsibility to challenge the oppression and exclusion of individuals and groups by institutions and society, leading to discrimination against people based on many grounds, e.g. socio-economic background, skin colour, gender. Community workers need to respect, value, support and promote difference and diversity and challenge inequality at all levels.

### **Participation**

Participation can be viewed as a continuum of activity that can start from information-sharing through to capacity building and empowerment. It recognises that people have a right to participation in decision and structures that affect their lives. In working to promote participation it is vital that inherent power imbalances are acknowledged and addressed. Ultimately the participation of marginalised and disadvantaged communities should contribute towards bringing about social change through appropriately informed policies and processes, to the benefit of all. Community workers have a responsibility to ensure work is based on the needs of the community, work towards the development and achievement of meaningful participation and power sharing.