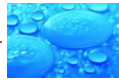


*Dear Students of Social Work and Fellow Social Workers,*



### **Refreshed opportunity to make an impact**

The world we live in now has become volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous. The environment has become more dynamic and complex. In this dynamic and complex environment, social work as a discipline that helps individuals, groups and communities to thrive has a refreshed opportunity to make an impact and assume leadership roles through its involvement, intervention and initiatives.

Social work is crucial to delivering social good or social services. Good quality social work can transform the lives of vulnerable people and is an essential part of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency work. Alongside professionals in health, social care, housing, employment and others, social workers play a key role in:

- identifying and helping people to access services which meet their needs at an early stage;
- helping to improve their overall well being; and
- reducing the risk of crisis and more costly demands on acute and statutory services.

Increasingly, there is a role that specialist social workers will play and a contribution that they will make to deepen expertise in specialism that is emerging to address the demographic changes and needs in our population. Specialists in social work with in-depth competencies and expertise will widen our ability to address issues more sharply in the new environment with deeper understanding. These must however be built on the fundamentals of what is core to social work in uplifting the lives of those who are being helped.

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### **Role of social work in helping to integrate**



The role of social work in an environment that values a counterbalancing view to clinical or medical models of illness, disorder and chronic disabilities is in shifting the perspective towards a more collaborative, multi-disciplinary and integrated approach in addressing social ills, problems and needs. Social work can help to shift inter-disciplinary practice and culture so that clients are central in responses from the systems. We are able to contribute because social work is a unified profession that works across social and family systems. The training from social work enhances our social perspective, ability to view from different perspectives and capability to be creative in adapting from interventions to provide a personalised approach in bringing about change in behaviours and systems.

There is a quiet appreciation in health and social care of the importance of integrating care. There are challenges in integrating systems, professions and cultures. This poses opportunity for transformation. When the integration is completed, it will result in accessible and coordinated help that are responsive to needs and in particular those of older persons, those with disability and carers who are growing in large numbers. The aim of the integrated systems should also be to meet the expectation of some basic consistency in client experience across different service providers. It is also about helping families and carers to provide the right support and to increase access to assets within their community.

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## Repositioning the leadership role



As a profession, social work has always played a key role in managing risk and complexity, working with people with the most profound and enduring health and social needs and who are often also socially isolated and at risk of harm. Social workers will continue to support people in crisis. It will continue to discharge the duties of good social work practice by holding a core responsibility in enabling citizens to access statutory social work services and good and coordinated advice to which they are entitled.

However, as we move towards greater integration of health and social care with a focus on prevention and well being to reduce demand for more intensive services, we have a unique opportunity to reposition our leadership role and contributor role to program design, service delivery and evaluation.

As social work becomes more active in the new environment, it must continue to play its role in advocating earlier intervention, building resilience, reducing and delaying dependency and ensuring people have all the information and enabling support that they need for better self-care.

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## Support from employers



Social work will flourish with the help of employers. Social workers in the future will increasingly be located in a range of organisations and contexts. They will also be found in the nexus of traditional social services and implementation of policies and program design. There will be opportunities for social workers to shape the social care market and enable co-production of services with individuals, groups and communities.

With the setting up of more ground agencies that focus on the needs of communities, social workers will be able to work collaboratively and innovatively with local communities to support community capacity, personal and family resilience, earlier intervention and active citizenship. The opportunity for developing community work practice has opened up. Social workers can respond to the goal of working alongside local people to develop their problem solving capacity, mobilise resources for the good of the more vulnerable and develop local leadership which is core to community development.

To play its role with some impact, social workers seek the support of employers to create the conditions which allow quality social work to flourish. These include strong operational management of social work practice, professional leadership at all levels, clarity about roles and priorities for social work and opportunities for career advancement and continuing professional development. Wherever social workers are on the staff, the infrastructure has to be in place to facilitate the work of social workers to optimise their contribution.

Social work is a profession that brings perspectives that increase understanding of human behaviour especially in circumstances of stress, crisis and uncertainties. It brings insights about how human beings with social issues respond to help and hence is able to alter, shape and create service delivery designs to increase responsiveness. In today's world of heightened uncertainty and ambiguity, the contribution of social work will become increasingly important.

Image courtesy of cuteimage at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

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