

Witness Seminars: Learning from Social Care's Past

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Witness seminars are:

- Increasingly used to investigate the development of public policies
- Used to challenge or complement 'elite' interviewing widely used in policy studies
- A way of bringing together carefully selected individuals who have played a key role in the development and/or implementation of policies or innovations
- Structured around a topic guide agreed with participants in advance
- Can open-up the discussion to a wider audience
- A source of data for future researchers, service providers, user-led groups and historians through their edited transcripts



The Supporting Adult Social Care Innovation (SASCI) project witness seminars

Seminar	The innovation	Time frame
The Care Certificate (online) <i>March 2023</i>	Development of a new training requirement introduced in 2015 for health and social care workers following inquiry into Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust (published in 2013)	2013 onwards
Social Worker registration (online) <i>March 2023</i>	New requirement for all Social Workers to be registered with the General Social Care Council established in 2001	1970s onwards
Towards an 'Ordinary Life' (In person with online audience) <i>July 2023</i>	Development of 'ordinary' community housing and services for people with learning disabilities (LD) as an alternative to long-stay hospital (institutional) care	1960s onwards

Topics agreed with SASCI research team, advisory group, and lived experience reference group

Organising witness seminars

- Identify key witnesses and Chair and meet early to discuss seminar topic and identify other witnesses
- Further meeting(s) with Chair and all witnesses to agree topic guide for the seminar
- Prepare short biographies of Chair and witnesses to use for promotional materials and published transcript
- Prepare and share any materials (slides etc) that Chair and/or witnesses want to use
- Decide in-person, online or hybrid format; ensure IT support.
- Allow time for careful editing of transcripts including links to key reports etc referenced; publish and publicise the transcripts



Contributions to the wider SASCI project

Provided historical perspectives on national policy innovations to help generate additional insights to complement the wider project. For example:

- Long gestation of policy innovations – Social Worker registration and Ordinary Life movement
- Range of stakeholders involved in some innovations – professional groups, civil servants, ministers, local services (statutory and third sector), journalists, service-user groups
- Effectiveness and longevity of policy innovations linked to early consideration of implementation challenges (Care Certificate/ Social Work registration) and/or are informed by local innovations (Ordinary Life movement)
- Ways in which research evidence and other sources of information are used to inform the innovation process – e.g. importance of journalist's reports to Ordinary Life movement



Reflections

- Recognise time needed to organise and the importance of preparation
- Helps to have witnesses in the same room together
- Check and edit the transcript carefully – witnesses might not remember all the factual details correctly
- Think about the audience – good to engage with contemporary stakeholders including service users
- Witnesses seem to enjoy catching-up with old colleagues and engaging with the research team!



The transcripts

- Manthorpe, J., & Purcell, C. (Eds.) (2023). *What Can we Learn from the Innovation of The Care Certificate? An Online Witness Seminar, 14th March 2023*. NIHR Policy Research Unit in Health and Social Care Workforce, The Policy Institute, King's College London. <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-147>
- Manthorpe, J., & Purcell, C. (Eds.) (2023). *How did Social Worker Registration in England Come About? An Online Witness Seminar, 27th March 2023*. NIHR Policy Research Unit in Health and Social Care Workforce, The Policy Institute, King's College London. <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-146>
- Manthorpe, J., & Purcell, C. (Eds.) (2024). *Towards an 'Ordinary Life': A Witness Seminar*. NIHR Policy Research Unit in Health and Social Care Workforce, The Policy Institute, King's College London. <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-170>