

Social Policy

How Does it Impact My Client, My Service and My Role?



**Unfair rules and practices that affect people in society need to be
*Challenged and Changed.***

Whilst advice may benefit an individual client, it is more effective in the end to help clients by tackling the root cause of a problem and persuading the policymaker to make a change. Social policy advocates for the use of evidence from case trends to lobby for change to appropriate decision makers on behalf of the public.

This is Social Policy.

There are two questions to ask when addressing unfair rules

Who Makes the Rule?

Why is it Detrimental?..... Or is there an accepted practice that is harmful?

Four Types of Success in Social Policy Work:

- A change in POLICY
- A change in PRACTICE
- A change in PERCEPTION
- A change in PROVISION

There are Multiple Reasons Why Social Policy Work is Important:

1. *It's Good for Clients*

Sometimes you can't solve a client's problem easily or quickly. However, it can be encouraging to them to know that you are taking up the issues raised long after they've left.

2. *It's Good for the Whole Community*

Having laws or policies changed helps not just a single client but also anyone in the community who has experienced the same problem.

3. *It's Good for Advice/Support Workers*

Successful social policy work means your organisation won't have to deal with repeat enquires regarding the same issue— good news for busy advisors.

4. *It's Good for Policymakers and Service Providers.*

Both benefit from feedback on ways to improve their service to the public – increasing their customer satisfaction.

What leads to a Social Policy Issue?

A case raises a social policy issue when it has implications that go beyond the particular case and highlight barriers including legislation, implementation of policy or communication across sectors.

Examples Include:

- A case reveals an organisational practice (such as a rule, or staff targets) or suggests a pattern of behaviour by staff that could be affecting other people besides your client. Of particular concern, of course, is treatment that seems unfair, unreasonable, unnecessarily bureaucratic, inefficient, discriminatory, or pressurising, or treatment that breaks or bends rules or involves responsibility buck-passing.
- There are indications that there has been a failure of communication with your client, or communication failure within or between organisations
- A client has been told that he or she can't be helped because of a lack of resources, such as a shortage of funds, the non-availability of material resources (e.g. social housing), or the lack of staff
- People are being deprived of their legitimate entitlements (possibly because the law is being broken), or it appears that the Government's expressed intention behind a piece of legislation has not been fulfilled, or Legislation is helping some people but not others who seem equally deserving.

Some Social Policy Issues in Practice

- The bank did not look thoroughly at client's current financial situation before lending them more money
- Insistence on online contact by Centrelink has led to long delays in processing benefit claims
- Deposits not refunded when consumer cancelled an order
- Employer pays less than the minimum wage
- Food costs more in rural areas than in towns
- Claimant such as a Single parent feels under pressure to take an unsuitable job by Centrelink
- Resident is unable to find afford dentist/ or has to choose between paying rent or obtaining their medication
- High cost of car /travel insurance for disabled driver
- Client(s) discriminated against on the grounds of disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or age
- Government agencies fail to meet their duties under legislation
- Unfair mobile phone utility bills contracts terms and conditions
- Clients with mental health issues not been given proper intervention or follow up