

South Glos Health and Social Care Network Meeting Notes, 16 February 2011

Discussion with Peter Murphy, Director of Community Care and Housing, South Gloucestershire Council

Attended: Janet Biggin, South Glos Council - Councillor; Kath Aldom, Pauls Place; Sue Evan Jones, Volunteer Centre - Yate; Dale Cranshaw, Princess Royal Trust - The Carers Centre; Mel Akers, Aspects And Milestones; Sheila Hewitt, Paul's Place; Alivia Harvey, Crossroads - South Glos. - Care Attendant Scheme; Wayne Song, C- Link; Marion Boateng, Cancer Help For Ethnic Communities; Peter Murphy, South Glos Council - Community Care Department; Terry Jones, Survive; Jacky Humphreys, The Green House; Jules Adams, Everycare; Grace Wiltshire, Princess Royal Trust - The Carers Centre; Bryony Campbell, British Red Cross; David Evan Jones, Volunteer Centre Yate; John White, NHS South Gloucestershire; Nancy Stevens, South Glos Chinese Association; Sue Tasker, South Glos Council - Leisure & Community Resources

Apologies: Janice Vincent, ICAS; Debbie Fear, Princess Royal Trust - The Carers Centre; Andrew Bright, Brandon Trust; Roxanne Faulks, West Of England Centre For Inclusive Living (WECIL); Sue Bateman, Action For Blind People/RNIB; Meryl Gaskell, Living; Kim Ash, Everycare; Leonie Seaborne, County Community Projects; Ray Swain, County Community Projects; Lorna Robertson, Alzheimer's Society - Bristol Branch; Joanne O'Neill, Alzheimer's Society - Bristol Branch; Sarah Booker, South Glos Link; Ellie Gleeson, DHI (Developing Health And Independence)

Speaker: Peter Murphy, Director of Community Care and Housing

Peter said that with the changing economic situation, there are both risks and opportunities. Funding for all councils will be different in a few years. South Glos council is more prepared than many other councils and better able to respond to the cuts, changes and challenges. The reduction in funding started with the last government and South Glos has taken a measured approach about how to reposition itself to meet the changes. Although the amount of funding has gone down, South Glos has a very strong cross-party commitment to protecting the wellbeing of the vulnerable in the community. They are developing outcomes and monitoring them with service users. Personal budgets present challenges for the commissioners of services and assessors. They are mapping the customer journey. The care management system has been very useful at one level but has infantilised users i.e. the council has decided what they need and what they will give them. The last government developed Putting People First, but now there is a new vision for adult social care. The direction of travel is to continue with personalisation, choice and control expressed preferably in personal budgets, given as direct payments.

A combination of cross party convergence on the importance of social care in South Glos and an efficient social services department has meant that the front line has been protected. Over the last four years, they have brought in budgets without substantial overspends. This year that has changed as the pressures have been very different and there has been a significant overspend in adult social care. The changes being made in health have had a knock on impact on social care. There have also been pressures on learning difficulties services, as more young people have come through the transitions process to adult social care in the last couple of years. The council has not yet agreed a budget, but if it is approved, an additional £2.7m would be allocated to adult social care in 2011-12.

Q: Will it be ring fenced?

A: No, the idea of ring fencing has largely disappeared. With this freedom comes a responsibility to understand the needs of the local population and to work in partnership with providers, The Care Forum etc. We need to understand what we are commissioning, what outcomes we expect and get feedback on it.

Q: I agree, but because of the ageing population, funding is primarily going to one section of the community. The less vulnerable are not getting a slice of the support.

A: That's true to some extent. Parents from the National Autistic Society, for example, say the same. The adult social care system is often described as broken. We are moving from a care management system to personalisation, but there is not enough money in the system as we face the ramifications of an ageing society. An enquiry is due to report on long term funding in adult social care. We are on the cusp of a major change about the way we fund adult social care.

Q: With the change agenda and personalisation, choice implies spare capacity in the market. Providers are having to get capacity right to meet the cuts agenda. What is the role of the local authority in market management? With personal budgets, we work with people who don't use words to communicate, so they need advocacy and brokerage. I'm worried about a two tier system developing. With people with learning difficulties, for example, they may not have a carer with those specialisms. You need trained PAs and someone who is coordinating it, who can work out pay scales, weekend leave etc.

A: Elasticity in the market is required. I'm not convinced that there is an umbrella structure that meets the needs of Avon. Elasticity is needed across boundaries. We have not got a trade association approach. Some aspects of the provider forum dialogue is about intelligence and understanding needs, promoting successful outcomes and enabling the market to shift.

Q: Small things could be put in place in our communities. It feels like it's the council versus the populace. Luncheon groups, for example, are very positive, but a lot of them closed due to the health and safety regulations. The council could give their expertise around these sorts of issues to a local group. With direct payments and care plans, a bit of expertise is needed and the council needs to recognise that. There is no support for our voluntary work and there should be collaboration with us as a community. It's just basics, there could be one worker in the council.

A: I agree with you that it can be over bureaucratic and regulatory and that approach can kill a community initiative. We need to protect, but with proportionality.

Q: We are about to lose a lot of years' experience of working with/supporting volunteers.

A: (John White) Direct payments could give people the opportunity to get together in groups and employ someone.

Q: Potentially, I agree as there are a high percentage of people on direct payments needing additional support.

A: Sue Jacques is employed as community support and has tried to put the social transformation grant into good practice. Helen Black, South Glos CVS, has put forward ideas about developing infrastructure support for voluntary organisations and made a very compelling case. The bid is going to the Local Strategic Partnership.

A: (Gillian Turner) As umbrella organisations for the voluntary sector we are working together. We need to make sure we know how and what support groups need and work together to provide it.

Q: There are a lot of people who did a lot post-war and who are now too old to volunteer. There are not as many volunteers and there is a gap in engaging people.

Q: Our son has autism and has been seeking housing. He has been assessed as band A, but was unable to make a bid for housing as nothing suitable came up for months and with the new directive has been taken off the list because he has not made a bid.

A: That policy is there because some people in temporary accommodation will stay in it for lengthy periods waiting for some ideal match. This is unfair but there also needs to be safeguards in the system around vulnerable people. You need to contact the housing choice team but let me have details later and I will take it back for you.

Q: It all depends on parents, carers and paid workers doing the bidding for housing but they may not be able to do it. The policy is one size fits all. There is a lack of communication and too much paper work. On the one hand carers are expected to provide support but are not kept informed, information only goes to the service user who may not be able to act on it.

A: If someone is identified as vulnerable, we will provide additional support. There is a bigger picture about who is accessing housing and is it fair. There is a limited number of properties and we need to know who is bidding.

Q: I have spoken to a social worker (not in South Glos) who would not push direct payments as there is too much impact on their work load in the short term.

A: The practitioners I meet don't look at it in those terms. There is a cultural shift to be made and it takes time.

Q: What happened to educating social workers?

A: There are very substantial training sessions. We are one of the top performers in the country around direct payments.

Q: We provide specialist services for vulnerable people with mental health issues. There are pressures on such small organisations at the moment. Who decides who are the specialist services that will be used? Service users can't get together. What is your advice?

A: There is no panacea. We need to develop infrastructure to support projects like yours. The work of small organisations is important. It feels a bit fragmented. We need to make sure that we have a rational, reasonable debate and use a limited pot of money to best effect.

Q: I hope that if the council is valuing the voluntary sector's expertise, it will work with us before difficult decisions are made.

Q: Are equality impact assessments being done on the cuts?

A: Yes. There is an equality impact assessment on all cabinet reports.

Q: Our partly accommodation based service is currently funded by Supporting People grant, but we don't yet know the budget. If Supporting People is to be phased out, how will it be replaced? If the amount of housing is decreasing, women will stay with us for longer.

A: I have met the chair of supporting people and a member of supporting people came to the last select committee. Effectively, Supporting People has gone. The issue is about who we have a relationship with. There are particular dilemmas for providers. How does a direct payment fit in with a sustainable infrastructure to develop a service in the future?

Homelessness is rising and the number of people leaving properties has dropped. Proposals around housing focus on affordable rents and limited tenure. If the councils discharge their responsibility through the private sector, one of the tasks for us is about working with the private sector. There is an interesting project ahead with an innovative response in hand.

Q: With self directed support that the person can access themselves, their needs are worked out by a computer and an indicative budget is awarded. If someone moves from direct payments to personal budgets, they won't necessarily have the same amount of funding. How

is it that the computer has produced figures which means they will receive less of a service than they are already receiving?

A: I think you are overestimating our technology. There is differential pricing between the traditional service and direct payments. Direct payments are pegged to specific rates. It is not the same as the Resource Allocation System (RAS). Your scenario could happen. The RAS takes needs and makes them into points i.e. money. It may not give you your purchasing power, there may need to be a bridge in the negotiations. It is swings and roundabouts.

Q: With some social workers, a lot of work is to be done in preparing people for the move to direct payments and personal budgets. The voluntary sector is well placed to provide that support. It can explain the pros and cons. Who provides support?

A: A4E was appointed following a tender.

Q: They provide the financial side very well, but not information.

A: One of the aspects of personalisation is person centred planning. Direct payments should only be a small part of that plan. It is about trust. We're the middle point.

Evaluation:

What was the most significant outcome of the event for you?

- Informative - big discussion on direct payment
- Further discussion of budgetary restraints and charges
- Hearing the issues and responses from the speaker - Peter Murphy
- Chance to ask questions of Peter Murphy.

Do you have any suggestions regarding topics/speakers for future meetings?

- Personalisation
- How direct payments will work for someone with dementia, lacking capacity
- Young carers (under 16 yrs old) respite, support groups etc

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

- Always interesting to meet with other like minded people from "across the board" to exchange thoughts and learn from each other

Content	Average mark (out of 5)
Understanding of subject at start	3.7
Understanding of subject at end	4.0
Sessions	
Speakers	4.0
Other elements	4.7
Organisation	
Pre-event information	4.5
Facilitation	4.6
Organisation on day	4.6
Venue	
Access	4.7
Refreshments	4.6
Standard of room	4.6