

KEY NOTES

Tower Hamlets (LBTH) Adult Social Care Pan-Providers Forum
Wednesday 20 July 2016, 9.30am- 12.00pm, Professional Development Centre

Presenters

Zena Cooke- *Corporate Director of Resources, LBTH*

Kirsty Cornell- *Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service, CEO (workshop)*

Barbara Disney- *Service Manager, Strategic Commissioning, LBTH (workshop)*

Anthony Walters- *Transformation Manager, Strategy, Partnerships and Performance, LBTH*

Kate Pitman- *Idea Store Development Manager, LBTH*

Rose Nakibirango- *Strategic Projects Manager, LBTH*

1. Introduction and housekeeping

- 1.1. Barbara Disney welcomed all to the forum and made points around housekeeping.

2. Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy

- 2.1. Zena Cooke delivered a presentation on the voluntary and community sector, offering an overview of the strategy and emphasising the four objectives underpinning the strategy. An action plan has been produced to support the delivery of each of the four objectives. This includes the development of a compact setting out the roles and responsibilities of council officers as well as the VCS. The plan will remain a working and live document, which will be refreshed annually, and a delivery group will be set up to overlook the delivery of the plan.
- 2.2. Zena set out the challenge facing the council over the next 3 years and beyond with the need to identify cost savings of over £60 million and on-going reductions in government funding which makes it even more important for the council to work with parties like the VCS to maximise limited resources.
- 2.3. Zena set out the council's view on the importance of co-production (focus of the workshop which followed), and working towards this in partnership with a particular focus on outcomes-based commissioning and delivery to get greater involvement without breaching procurement rules.

- 2.4. Zena noted that the objective of maximising the value from resources is likely to cause some anxiety, but this is important given the current financial challenges facing us all. The increasing shift in focus from grant funding to commissioning stems from the need to undertake needs analysis in order to identify gaps in provision and avoid duplication. Furthermore, the council is considering how to increase the period it funds VCS organisations, from providing one year funding towards moving to multi-year arrangements to give greater certainty and stability.
- 2.5. Zena noted the potential for the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS) to support the VCS with capacity building in order to help deliver the action plan. Currently, co-production is being trialled in the area of community cohesion which involves working with colleagues from THCVS and the voluntary and community sector. A provider rep raised the issue of accessibility, and how accessible the THCVS is to all providers. Kirsty Cornell offered to take forward this discussion- **ACTION**. There are already good examples of co-production that have been taking place in the borough, and the strategy will aim to expand and strengthen this.
- 2.6. Zena also noted that by 2020, all councils will be funded by business rates and council tax only, which will have further implications on resource availability and risk.
- 2.7. On the matter of volunteering, Zena explained that medium and smaller sized businesses have expressed an interest in giving something back to their community, but there are issues around capacity. There is potential for the council to support and facilitate this activity to increase the volunteering contribution from these businesses.
- 2.8. A summary of the VCS strategy was made available to providers for a workshop discussion which followed. Providers were asked to discuss and answer the following questions (flip chart papers were available for note-taking):
- 2.8.1. What does co-production mean to you? (Providers were asked to put together a definition).
- 2.8.2. What can the council do to support co-production?
- 2.8.3. What can the voluntary and community sector do to support co-production?
- 2.9. The various responses received have been noted separately and is available of the providers' [webpage](#). When providers were asked to provide feedback on their responses, the following points were identified as some of the recurring and common themes:

- 2.9.1. Council to bring together all the key partners (e.g. businesses, the VCS, businesses etc) to share resources and information and ensure better partnership-working, including among providers. Gateway offered their space for utilising.
- 2.9.2. The VCS to play an active role in service design, to be offered choice and to be part of key decision-making.
- 2.9.3. Council to be open, honest and clear about what is required in terms of roles providers can play, and what can be achieved realistically given the limitation on resources (have a transparent agenda). This will help identify what is negotiable and what isn't.
- 2.9.4. Council to liaise with businesses to provide volunteers.
- 2.9.5. Council to allow for longer timescales for applications, so that providers have an opportunity to inform local people.
- 2.9.6. Ensure a better understanding of the borough's landscape, values and needs.
- 2.9.7. Providers to be more committed, consistent and realistic about their expectations and outcomes that can be achieved, as some can be ambitious during the tendering of services, which does not always continue during service delivery.

3. Charging for Adult Social Care

- 3.1. Anthony Walters informed providers about the council's plan to start charging for a number of services. Tower Hamlets is currently one of two boroughs currently not charging for most services. Plans have been set in motion to start charging for most services from January 2017 onwards, and currently people are being consulted on how this can be undertaken. Providers and service users have until 19th August 2016 to put forward their views. The council currently charges for residential and extra care support only, however this will be rolled to most adult social care services. The services exempt from the charges are telecare, carers' services and reablement.
- 3.2. Anthony noted that any charges imposed on service users will be subject to a financial assessment and accompanied by welfare benefit advice, which will determine whether or not a service user is below the statutory income threshold, which is the minimum amount of income the government recommends people can live on. The council is thinking about increasing this threshold for some users to £150 per week (the minimum threshold is currently £71 for people under 25 and £91 for people over 25 but below

pension age). As part of the consultation the council is seeking views on this proposal.

3.3. Anthony encouraged providers to complete the consultation survey. Further details are available on the council website, which includes a helpline too. Sheila agreed to circulate the details- **ACTION.**

3.4. The agenda item generated a lot of discussion and queries. Key points and queries raised are as follows:

3.4.1. A provider rep queried whether current transport support will be subject to the charges. Anthony clarified that any transport support provided and funded by the council will be subject to the charge and considered during the financial assessment.

3.4.2. On the matter of whether service users have been informed about the charging policy, Anthony clarified that leaflets on charging have been sent to 2,700 service users likely to be affected by the decision to charge (they are all current service users of services to be charged e.g. home care service users). Leaflets have also been distributed to key information hubs/ main access points in the borough such as Idea Stores, in an attempt to raise awareness about the decision, especially among prospective service users. A public consultation is also underway and a press release was issued to inform the wider public. It is hoped that other organisations not members of the forums are also made aware of the changes via these avenues.

3.4.3. Some provider reps expressed concerns about not being consulted on about the decision to impose charges on services. Anthony clarified that the decision has already been made by the council in line with legislation, and was consulted on as part of the budget setting process, however consultation is currently underway to determine how the charges can be imposed, and to seek service users' perspective on the impact the change will have on them. Providers, like Gateway Housing, requested a copy of the leaflet holding information on the decision to charge. Anthony will liaise with Sheila to distribute/ circulate the leaflets- **ACTION.**

3.4.4. A number of provider reps raised concerns about the impact the charging decision will have on service users, including refusal to access services which can have a detrimental effect on users, especially those who are most vulnerable. Providers wish to know how this can be mitigated, and how the transition can be supported to deal with stress and strains. For example, service users accessing hostels could be evicted if they refuse to pay for their support, and this will have an impact

on providers as well as other service users of the provision. This is a concern that Anthony and colleagues at the council will take on board. Anthony shared that if service users are deemed liable for a charge but they state that they are unable to pay, the council will look into offering advice around debt management and other advice to identify way forward. A provider rep also pointed out that if free transport support is no longer available to service users, then they may refuse to access their services, which can lead to negative outcomes such as spiralling into isolation. A provider rep is interested in knowing how, in cases where service users reject services due to the charges imposed, this can be measured.

- 3.4.5. A provider rep queried about the elements that are considered during the financial assessment. Anthony clarified that housing costs taken into consideration will include statutory elements such as rents, council tax, mortgages, however will exclude utility bills. Also, income obtained via employment are not considered- income assessed include benefits received and pensions for example.
- 3.4.6. On the matter of service users being 'put off' accessing services due to the charges, Anthony noted that this has not been generally the case in the other boroughs that have imposed charging for services.
- 3.4.7. A council officer based at the hospitals asked whether the assessment on financial circumstances of an individual can be postponed in cases where service users need time to recuperate to recover upon discharge from hospital (this could be for various reason such as mental ill-health), and whether a reasonable timescale can be identified for when the assessment can start.
- 3.4.8. A provider rep asked why the council cannot impose a set charge. Anthony explained that the limit will differ depending on peoples' various needs, and therefore a set charge cannot be imposed.
- 3.4.9. Mahendra Rastogi from Beyond Barriers invited Anthony to talk about the upcoming plans around charges with his colleagues on 11th August at 62 Roman Road. Sheila to send Anthony Mahendra's details so that this can be arranged- **ACTION**.
- 3.4.10. Anthony thanked providers for their contribution, and agreed to take forward the feedback received.

4. Information sharing: The Idea Store Friends and Carers scheme

- 4.1. Kate provided some background information on Idea Stores before informing providers about a new service model aimed at bringing library services to people who find it difficult to visit their local Idea Store. The scheme pairs up a 'home reader' with a nominated 'friend and carer' of their choice who will select books and other library materials for them and take them to their home. A gold membership card is issued to the volunteer which provides a number of benefits including exemption from any late return fees, vouchers for free coffee/tea and a cake at Idea Stores in Whitechapel or Bow and more. Kate is interested in receiving feedback from providers, who can leave their views via the Idea Store website. Sheila can circulate the details- **ACTION.**

- 4.2. Kate pointed out that the friend and carer scheme supports the relationship between the service user and volunteer, thereby supporting one of the objectives of the VCS strategy around volunteering.

Feedback

- 4.3. Mahendra from Beyond Barriers requested that computers at Idea Stores are made accessible for individuals with a visual loss and those who are blind. This requires downloading of a specific software. Kate and Mahendra to liaise and take this forward- **ACTION.**
- 4.4. One of the provider reps from Gateway Housing suggested nominating their staff as volunteers for the friend and carer scheme. Kate also clarified that a volunteer can befriend as many people as they like.
- 4.5. A provider rep queried whether the friend and carer scheme will be replacing the home delivery service. Kate clarified that they will remain two separate services.

5. Information sharing: double-handed care

- 5.1. Rose Nakibirango provided an overview on planned improvement in moving and handling practices and reduction in the use of double-handed care. Rose explained that any changes from double-handed care to single-handed care will be subject to re-assessments involving occupational therapists (OT) and a social worker. Rose encouraged providers to be involved in the re-assessments where possible, and noted that assessments will look at various needs, not just the moving and handling element of support.

Feedback:

- 5.2. Rose asked providers what the perceived benefits are for shifting to single-handed care. The following were noted: fewer carers involved in an individual's life; the 1:1 support arrangement has the potential to strengthen the relationship between the service user and carer. On the reverse side, some providers noted the potential negative effect of shifting to single-handed care, such as those concerning the health and safety of the carer.
- 5.3. On the matter of whether the views of service users will be sought during the re-assessment, Rose clarified that re-assessments must reflect the person's views. However, the council has a duty to support people in the most cost-effective way given limited resources.
- 5.4. Some provider reps raised concerns that in reality OTs are not always involved during the review of individuals' care and support needs. Providers want confidence that there will be a robust approach to ensuring that OTs are always involved in all reviews, whether bi-yearly or annually. Rose agreed to take this concern and query on-board, and acknowledged that there are general concerns around the lack of provider input during assessments and reviews. As a result of the concerns raised, senior managers within the council have asked staff to involve providers in the assessment process.
- 5.5. A provider rep also expressed that reviews are not always as frequent as they should be, and queried whether the timescales are monitored.
- 5.6. A provider rep queried how the change from double-handed care will affect personal assistants employed directly by the families, and what support will be available to them.
- 5.7. Another forum member asked whether OTs will be provided with further resources, for the purchase of specialist equipment for example. Rose responded that new types of equipment will be provided alongside training for OT and social work staff. A provider rep is also interested in knowing if any bespoke training will be available for appropriate professionals.

6. Meeting summary and end

- 6.1. Barbara thanked members for their input.

Next meeting: Tuesday 20 September 2016