

local area coordination

First four months evaluation report

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Executive Summary

This is the first four month evaluation report from the Local Area Coordination (LAC) Steering Group, written for anyone interested in understanding more about how LAC is working in Thurrock. Our report outlines the achievements, actions and impact of their work alongside local people and communities and explains how we would like to expand our approach across Thurrock.

Whilst very early in its development, the early outcomes have been consistent with best practice sites nationally and internationally. Outcomes include

- People supported to find non service solutions to problems and challenges (reducing demand)
- Increasing relationships and circles of support (reducing isolation)
- Improved access to information (improving choice, control, health and well-being)
- Support to self advocate (being heard, control)
- Early development of community connections, understanding of community and citizen resources and inclusive, supportive community action

Feedback from people supported, families, community and service partners has been very positive, valuing the support, joint working and contribution Local Area Coordinators have made.

The Local Area Coordination programme provides an opportunity for reforming and integrating services, establishing a more connected, simplified system with a greater emphasis on prevention, capacity building, individual/family/community resilience to reduce demand.

Further development of Local Area Coordination in Thurrock

We explain how we would like to extend Local Area Coordination across Thurrock and invite partners to support this expansion.

1. Introduction

Over a year ago a representative Steering Group was established to lead, contribute to and oversee the development and delivery of a Local Area Coordination Project which involved:

- Research of the potential of Local Area Coordination in contributing to the Thurrock Vision
- Visits to existing national Local Area Coordination sites
- Clarifying and understanding how Local Area Coordination works and will contribute to wider service reform
- Building connections with other strength based approaches including Asset Based Community Development and micro enterprises
- Development of a Thurrock Project Implementation Plan
- Conversations within broader council and partner organisations.
- Conversations with local communities and build links with Community Leaders
- Develop supporting information, materials to promote Local Area Coordination
- Develop job profile and specification for the LAC role and processes e.g. supervision, appraisal, induction
- Develop a citizen led recruitment process, with contribution from service partners

It was agreed by the steering group to recruit LAC's in three areas and look at the impact LAC's can have and Stanford –Le –Hope, Grays Riverside and Purfleet were identified by the group as the areas. However, there was a lot of enthusiasm from stakeholders to trial the approach in South Ockendon as well to work alongside the South Ockendon Centre/Hub.

2. Background

Building Positive Futures

Building Positive Futures is Thurrock's programme to support older and vulnerable people to live well. Originating in Adult Social Care, Building Positive Futures recognises that to create neighbourhoods where older and vulnerable people can enjoy the best quality lives, requires a partnership between residents, the council, its health partners and community organisations as well as shops and businesses, schools and colleges. Building Positive Futures centres on three main themes:

- Better health and wellbeing: so people stay strong and independent
- Improved housing and neighbourhoods: to give people more – and better – choice over how and where they live as they grow older
- Stronger local networks: to create more hospitable, age-friendly communities

Local Area Coordination was selected as an approach because it builds partnerships with:

- People - who may be vulnerable, isolated or excluded due to age, frailty, disability or mental health needs to stay strong and connected and find non service solutions to issues wherever possible.
- Communities - to help make them more welcoming, inclusive and mutually supportive.
- Services - to promote a simpler, more connected system, better outcomes for local people and services that are more personal, flexible and local.

A key aim of Local Area Coordination remains to divert people from statutory or formal services through local, flexible, community solutions wherever possible. It supports individuals, families and communities to stay strong, connected and mutually supportive.

Why is this important?

The service system is very complicated and often disconnected, with either duplicating or conflicting services.

With current demands on existing services and the predicted increase in need across age and service types in coming years, we are faced with some big challenges and questions. Do we;

- *Increase the size of services to deal with increasing demand from people in crisis or vulnerable to needing service intervention?*
- *Manage demand by further tightening eligibility, but leaving higher unmet need and vulnerability?*
- *Reduce demand by intentionally working to support individuals, families and communities to stay strong, diverting people from formal services wherever possible through sustainable, local, flexible individual and community solutions.*

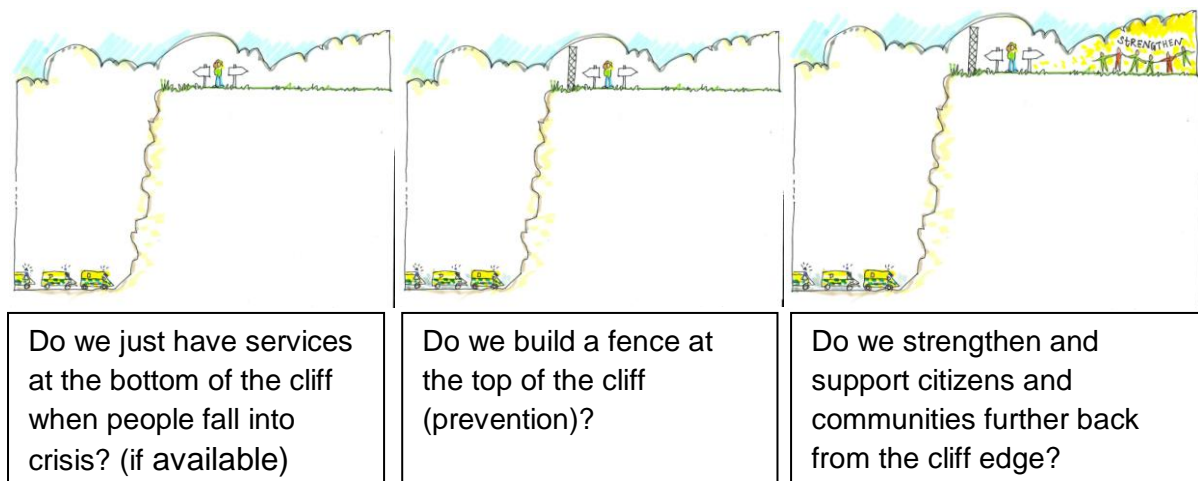
In reality, there needs to be a balance of all three, but now requires an intentional re balancing of the service system to support “demand reduction”, with LAC and local solutions at the front end, supported by strong, effective, integrated services as a “back up.”

Our Challenge

The challenge now is, do we wait for people to fall into crisis and “fix” them with (increasingly scarce) services

or

help individuals, families and communities to stay strong and connected and to find practical, non service solutions wherever possible?



Building a shared vision is the building block for imagining and pursuing a better future for Thurrock citizens, local communities and services.

What did we already know about LAC?

Multiple evaluations over the past 25 years have shown that, where there is strong, connected leadership and effective design, there are a range of consistent outcomes and opportunities.

These include

- Reduced demand for formal services
- People diverted from crisis and more expensive services: for example: The recent Derby City evaluation showed estimated diverted costs of £800,000 within the first 12 months (formative stage), whilst operating at 40% capacity in 2 locations.
- Increased informal/unpaid supportive relationships/circles of support
- Preventing people from unnecessary out-of-home placements.
- Increasing the capacity of families to continuing care
- Improved access to information
- Contribution to reform of services and specialist roles – rebalancing funding and system
- Better resourced communities – LAC generates additional resources £3 for every £1 spent
- Cost per service user is 35% lower than the national average (when compared to non- LAC areas) – significantly increased coverage within existing resources and also 12% higher satisfaction rates with consumers
(Government of Western Australia and Disability Services Commission report May 2003- LAC Review – Terms of Reference 3: Value for Money Final Report)

LAC's fit in with the requirements of the Care Bill and will help all partners achieve some of the duties set out. The Care Bill requires:

- Promote individual wellbeing (clause 1) – The LAC's are already showing that this approach promotes resilience for the future and improves wellbeing.
- Prevent the need for care and support (clause 2) – duty to prevent the, delay and reduce the need for care. There is a requirement to shift towards prevention. There is clear evidence that services can be avoided and alternative supports that will prevent and delay care can be achieved. LAC's are working with people who will otherwise not contact services until they are in crisis.
- Promoting integration (clause 3) – duty to carry out care and support functions with the aim of integrating services. LAC's are working across all partners and have a key role in health promotion, health and mental health prevention.
- Information and advice (clause 4) – This is a key aspect of the role of LAC's and the local knowledge is proving to be a real success of the role.
- Market Shaping (clause 5) - LA's must promote diversity and equality in the provision of services. LAC's are working in communities and local solutions and services are starting to respond and develop.

3. First 4 Months in Thurrock

Steering Group Development

A Local Area Coordination Steering Group was established to provide service and community wide leadership for this project.

We are really pleased about the commitment and contribution of the Steering Group to date.

Membership includes representatives from ; South Essex Partnership Foundation Trust, North East London Foundation Trust, Community Voluntary Services, Housing, Adult Social Care, Healthwatch, Public Health, Children's Social Care, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, The Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

One of the successes of the Steering Group has been the opportunity for leaders to come together to share information, expertise and connections, start to build a shared vision for the future and consider how our individual and collective services can support the development and success of Local Area Coordination in Thurrock.

The Steering Group members have contributed "Pledges", outlining their planned actions for making Local Area Coordination successful in Thurrock and understood/supported within their services. The Pledges are attached as appendix A

Recruitment of LAC's

The Local Area Coordinators were chosen by local communities in a highly inclusive recruitment process led by CVS and Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions. This approach is now also being used across other services for roles including Social workers, Support Planner and Occupational Therapists. This was achieved because we had already made good links with local community leaders. Housing colleagues are also now going to look at this as a way to recruit new staff.

The three LAC's in post so far are:

- Ben Dubois – Grays Riverside
- Jonathan Biddle – Stanford (and Corringham)
- Francis Allie – South Ockendon and providing some support to Purfleet

We have not been successful in recruiting to an LAC in Purfleet to date but Francis will be starting to support with some cases while we continue to recruit. In recent weeks the Fire and Rescue Service have shown interest in seconding a Fire Officer for the fourth post and discussions are underway.

All three LAC's come from varying backgrounds, giving a broad range of skills, expertise and experience to the team.

A comprehensive induction process was used which incorporated an introduction to Adult Social Care, which was successful and will now be used for all new staff.

Appendix B shows the recruitment process used in summary

Working alongside Individuals and Families

Since the Local Area Coordinators (LAC's) started there have been 54 introductions to the service. Out of the introductions:

- 13 have been allocated to Stanford-Le-Hope

- 17 have been allocated to Grays Riverside and
- 15 have been allocated to South Ockendon
- 0 have been allocated to Purfleet
- 3 are out of the allocated LAC areas and we have not allocated these to date
- 5 are out of the allocated LAC area but we have still worked alongside these individuals.

There are two levels of support available through Local Area Coordination. These are:

- Level 1 support is the provision of information and/or limited support. There is no assessment or intake process. Anyone can contact the Local Area Coordinator for Level 1 support. Although information and advice is often given and no further support is needed at that time, a connection has been made that may be of benefit in the future.
- Level 2 support is a longer term relationship supporting people (children and adults); who are vulnerable due to physical, intellectual, cognitive and/or sensory disability, mental health needs, age or frailty and require sustained assistance to build relationships, nurture control, choice and self sufficiency, plan for the future, find practical solutions to problems etc;

Who is receiving support?

- 28 are male and 26 are female.
- Ages 27 – 94 years
- 15 are receiving “Level 2” support currently
- Of the people currently receiving support:
 - 8% have learning disabilities,
 - 10% have mental health issues,
 - 53% that are older people,
 - 18% that have physical disabilities,
 - 8% have sensory impairments and
 - 3% “other”

How are we coming into contact with people?

To date introductions are from a wide variety of sources including:

- The Council’s initial contact service Community Solutions
- Social workers and support planners across all services.
- Family Mosaic
- MDT meetings based around GP surgeries
- The Mayor of Thurrock Council and ward Councillors
- Direct from community and meeting people at Community Events

- The South Ockendon Centre (Hub)

Achievements to date

Although the LAC service has only been active 16 weeks, there have already been a range of outcomes emerging. There is a very strong theme emerging around isolation in our local communities and a need for people who do not meet current eligibility criteria. Below are examples of early outcomes for each part of the LAC role.

These have included:

- *Supporting people to build new relationships, overcoming isolation*

A large number of introductions are from people or regarding individuals who are isolated and would not meet the Council's criteria and were not eligible for services. Support has been provided to introduce people back to their local church, and introducing people to community members through interests such as allotments and gardening projects. There have been a number of cases where people have a rich history of their local area and have been connected with the local historian and museum. One lady has been reintroduced to old friends via network of neighbours through gardening. This is a problem for individuals of all ages and especially prevalent in people with mental health issues. Support is being provided to connect people with activities and opportunities so they are not alone over the Christmas period.

- *Supporting people to find non service, practical solutions to problems and assisting them to utilise personal and local networks to develop practical solutions,*

The LAC's having local knowledge and connections is key e.g. introducing people to others in their community where statutory day care was an original request/consideration. Alternative connections have been made through local interest groups and people such as Men's clubs, allotments, choirs and Yachting Clubs. A local group of people are going to support a family to move some sheds and rehouse them. A gentleman has been helped to buy paint for his bins to avoid burglary as this was key for him and avoided referral to housing services. Volunteers from the South Ockendon Centre are being connected to support an individual to move and settle in their new home.

There is clear evidence that LAC's are having different conversations as they are not bound by eligibility criteria and the need to complete an assessment in a visit. They have local knowledge and explore issues that would not usually be discussed.

- *Helping people to speak up/be heard/be in control*

For example, coordinating meetings with attendance officers and family, and successfully supporting two individuals to plan, attend and win appeals for benefits and housing. Also supporting people to book repairs and arrange support. Successfully plan, prepare and attend for benefits hearings. An individual was supported to be an active contributing citizen within their local community for example, sign up with electoral register and another was supported to contact the local Community Police for help with damage to their property.

- *Helping people to think about and plan for the future and keep strong*

For example, supporting an individual to access a volunteering opportunity, and helping an individual to move home. Also supporting a family to think about future aims for their children. Also helping an individual to access health equipment to allow self management. Providing

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connections to access to health information and support. LAC's have been talking to individuals about how to build a vision for a better life and some short term steps for getting there. Connections have been made to link with organisations and local resources about housing, employment, voluntary opportunities and health support. Work is ongoing with one lady to keep her safe while there are fire risks around her property. A number of supports are being provided for carers and supporting families to think of the future.

- *Taking time to get to know local people, families, communities and services*

LAC's are getting to know the areas they work in and making connections. Introductions have been made to numerous clubs, groups, individuals, assets, schools across all age ranges. Surestart, Libraries, Community forums, Part of working group for development of Stanford Hub, Traveller communities, Fire, Police, Children and Family Services (Statutory and Community), GPs, Faith Groups, Local Schools, Voluntary and Community Groups

- *Identifying and building local community resources*

Two local groups were going to close due to lack of support and the LAC's have been able to introduce people to support them. A local charitable organisation has been connected with individuals which will provide mutual benefit e.g. supporting a person with a love of gardening to assist maintain gardens.

- *Becoming a point of contact for local people and providing them with timely advice and information*

Local people are now talking to LAC's to find out what is in the area. They have provided people with information about all local services and resources - Citizens Advice, how to organise repairs, help to appeal and claim benefits, providing information about the impact of benefits of volunteering for example, an individual was directed to Ngage who provided legal information about hours able to work.

- *Building positive working relationships at individual, family, community and service levels (across service types)*

The LAC's are supporting people to co ordinate their services where more than one service is involved, this includes a family where health, education and carers support are involved and other individuals are being supported where children's' social care, adult social care and housing are all involved. This coordination role can be key.

- *Support people to develop practical, low cost/no cost solutions to needs (diverting people from services)*

The Local Area Coordinators are seeing examples of people finding non service solutions to problems that would otherwise have required future funded services:

- Supporting an individual to not need personal budget
- Supporting individuals to not access social care funded day care
- Supporting two individuals which has led to a reduction in phone calls to specialist services
- Increasing number of stories of isolated older people being supported to think about the future and build connections and opportunities with other local people

There is also early evidence of improvements in health that will reduce demands on health and mental health budgets for the future.

Some short stories are attached (Appendix C) highlighting where LAC's have worked alongside local people

Wider Impact for Services and Communities

The LAC's have been taking time to get to know their local communities, organisations, statutory partners.

Local Area Coordination and Asset Based Community Development are driving conversations around strength based approaches/practice and reform to make services more local, personal, flexible and efficient.

Some examples of the early wider impact of the introduction of Local Area Coordination include:

- Inclusive recruitment of LACs, approach now being used for recruiting other roles
- Comprehensive induction of new LACs – now being used by other services
- Cultural change – a move to focus on strength and community based practice, prevention and capacity building.
- Discussions taking place around building a shared vision building across service types – a focus on prevention and keeping people strong as well as service provision
- Increased opportunities for “face to face” conversations across services
 - Greater awareness of roles
 - Conversations around future shared, efficient resourcing
- Emerging partnerships and joint working across service types including Fire and Police
- Emerging partnerships between LAC and Social Work
- Sharing learning with and from other areas for example, sharing experiences and learning with Gloucestershire and Derby City.

What are the Potential Benefits of Working in this Way?

- Shared resourcing and efficiencies
- Reduced dependence and demand
- Especially in context of current and predicted rise in “need” across service types/age groups.
- For people with MH needs – or early input/response where needed (before crisis)
- Reduced demand from people with “non health issues” and better management of LT conditions
- Finding non service, low cost/no cost solutions.
- Support to people who have refused services (referrals from MDT) (All services))
- More effective engagement with isolated and excluded people – opportunities for engagement re
 - Planning for the future, solving problems, building relationships/connections to tackle isolation
 - Access to health related information and initiatives
- Increased and better use of knowledge of community and individual resources
- A simpler, more integrated, effective and efficient service system

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- A single point of contact and support in the local community
- Early prevention opportunities – environmental issues (housing adaptations etc)
- Wider opportunities of intentional co working of LAC, ABCD and Community Hubs.

From a Deputy Manager:

"I have found the input of LAC very useful in supporting a service user who is quite reluctant to accept support from the main stream activities that are available in the community. Working at an individual level LAC has the ability to be more creative in their approach to develop a rapport and to gain the trust of the individual in order that they can establish what may be suitable activities to peruse. I do believe that their role is adding value to the Community and will seeking to make further referrals to the LAC. However, it is early days in the working relationship of the LAC and the service user but would be willing to provide feedback as their involvement progresses"

From a Family:

"Different options were explored with Jon that I hadn't known about. We weren't under interrogation and he wasn't trying to trip us up like it has felt before"

From the Mayors office:

"We have supported him brilliantly, and I have spoken to him and he really appreciates it."

From support planners:

"I have found them easy to approach and discuss possible referrals with them, making it a very accessible service. The flexibility of the community engagement that they are able to involve also makes in interesting to speak to them from a different perspective".
"I have found them very useful, and that they are able to contact and engage with service users/carers as a follow up."

From MDT coordinator (NEFLT)

"From a health perspective it links in well with the Primary Care MDT's as we identify patients who would benefit from LAC intervention and can do direct referrals.
" A patient who wished to monitor his own blood pressure to self-manage his Long Term Condition was made aware to Heart Failure team who installed Telehealth within 24 hours, patient extremely happy "
" Complex patient who has difficulty in managing at home safely, through LAC intervention the patient is being supported to remain at home, the LAC has been able to dedicate the time to make this happen "
"Patient identified as being lonely and isolated, contact with the LAC has benefitted, as now they have information re clubs/centres of interest relevant to him within his own community "
"The introduction of the LAC's is a way of supporting the community through shared learning and joint working across all services including, health, social care, voluntary and others to benefit all concerned by achieving outcomes suited to the individual."

From a Cllr:

"The LAC's are essential. Recently my work load locally has increased. I can think of two cases recently where Francis has been excellent in helping with a resident. I feel the need for LAC's will increase and the role they play invaluable!!"

From Social Worker:

"Personally I will recommend that LAC should continue. For example, Ben has been supporting my SU with accessing other social inclusion as she declined the use of our day-care. This lady is un-befriended and her environment seems to be unsafe. Ben managed to link her with an old friend and he maintained contact to minimise social isolation. Ben is working concurrently with fire service to address other safety issues that was highlighted. LAC is very essential part of service in the community as they cover the gaps between social care and health"

From a Carer:

“My experience with the LAC project and specifically with Jon is very positive. He has been very proactive in helping P to obtain voluntary work. P relates to him brilliantly and I feel that as Jon accompanied P, he has encouraged and supported him to believe that he is able to speak for himself in a confident manner. I understand from P that Jon is the only one who really understands and listens to him. Lastly, Jon has kept me updated as to any progress, and I am therefore also able to understand and support P.”

From Social Worker:

“The LAC’s are always helpful and provide advice, information and sign posting even when its areas their not technically linked to. Further LAC coverage will be great.”

From a lady who is working with a LAC:

“LAC was a great comfort, at a time where everything was very dramatic. It was good to have someone to come into my home at a stressful time.”

4. Next steps

Building a Shared Vision – Our Challenge

Currently, there is not an agreed shared vision between all service and community partners. This increases the risks of complex, disconnected services becoming part of the problem, rather than part of the solution for local people.

Building a shared vision and plan for action is central to strengthening communities, supporting people to need services less (reduce demand) and to make services more effective, local, personal and accountable.

Building a shared vision and action, in partnership with local citizens, will also support closing the gap between citizens and services.

Within this shared vision, it will be important to have a shared understanding of the role and contribution of Local Area Coordination, ABCD, Community Hubs and micro enterprises.

Building a shared vision is the building block for imagining and pursuing a better future for Thurrock citizens, local communities and services.

Expanding Local Area Coordination across Thurrock

Via the Steering Group, we have already started to identify the possible mutual benefits across services and range of outcomes for local people, families and communities through a shared vision and action including:

- Support to build practical, local solutions to problems - Reduced demand for formal adult and children/family social care, health, GP, housing, mental health services – including residential care, day services, health/hospital services and “out of area” placements.
- Individuals and families supported to plan for the future
- Families more able to continue caring role

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- Stronger, more welcoming, inclusive and supportive communities
- Support to build valued, supportive relationships – reduce isolation, solve problems
- Support to contribute to community
- Support to maintain housing or tenancies
- Better support to carers - support to continue caring role
- Improved information (include local health related information and support) sharing alongside “difficult to engage” individuals and communities.
- Isolated, excluded or marginalised people have better access to timely and relevant information, including health information, initiatives and support
- Better access to services when required.
- Better management of long term conditions due to better access to information, advice and equipment.
- A more streamlined, integrated system – reduction in multiple/duplicating service contact and assessment

Based on these very positive outcomes for our first four months of operation, the LAC Steering Group propose that a business case is put forward for funds to be allocated from the Integrated Transformation Fund for the Future Expansion of Local Area Coordination across Thurrock

We propose an expansion from 3 to 8 Local Area Coordinators, plus a Local Area Coordination Manager to provide comprehensive coverage across Thurrock from April 2014.

Estimated Resources Required

The additional 5 Local Area Coordinators, plus a Local Area Coordinator Manager would cost approximately £380k recurrent.

Adult Care is currently funding approximately £120k per year for the three LAC’s in post and will continue to do so.

A Local Area Coordinator would cost approximately £40,000 per year. This equates to:

- 1 residential care placement for older person or 0.5 for an adult
- 3 people avoiding need for day care @ 5 days per week
- 8 people home care package @ 1hr per day
- 2-3 people avoiding eviction

Appendix A – LAC Pledges

The Local Area Coordination Vision Statement

The Local Area Coordination Vision Statement states that:

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'All people in Thurrock live in welcoming communities that provide friendship, mutual support, equality and opportunities for everyone, including people vulnerable due to age, disability or mental health needs, their families and carers'.

The Local Area Coordination Charter

'To develop partnerships with individuals and families as they build and pursue their goals and dreams for a meaningful life and with local communities to strengthen their capacity to include people vulnerable due to age, disability or mental health needs as valued citizens'.

Local Area Coordination Steering Group Pledges

1. Leadership of this programme will require the Council to pledge to provide strategic and operational leadership towards the goal of fundamentally changing the relationship between the Local Authority and the citizen. This pledge will include a transformed service offer which places the citizen and by extension the community at the heart of decision making to enable the development of a place that builds resilience and is solution focused. The statutory agencies and the community will work in partnership to ensure each individual is supported to live the life they would choose for themselves wherever possible.
2. Local Area Co-ordination will form part of the Housing Transformation Plan, as we review new ways of working together. We will ensure we build understanding and commitment to LAC with all those who work in and with housing and we will aim to work together differently, so we can make a difference to our residents and local communities.
3. We will measure the savings made through Local Area Co-ordination and pledge to reinvest this amount into community action and infrastructure to ensure long term sustainability.
4. We will also identify a range of sources to secure long term funding within existing resource to expand the Local Area Co-ordination service.
5. Community Health services are fully committed to close collaboration with all partners to ensure health services work with the Local Area Co-ordination service to improve the health and well being of local people.
6. To take responsibility for effective communication of Local Area Co-ordination information to all Stakeholders in Thurrock
7. We will use learning from Local Area Co-ordination and asset based approaches as a catalyst to transform current services (across all services) and our commissioning in the future.
8. I will lead in working with the voluntary sector and community organisations to build a shared understanding, positive vision and commitment to the development of LAC in Thurrock, identify opportunities and possibilities for partnership working and inclusion and contribute to wider strength based reform of community organisations and services in Thurrock

9. This transformation will be delivered in agreement with the principles of the Thurrock Compact.

Appendix B - Citizen Led Recruitment

From Equal Opportunities to Real Citizens Recruiting (From LAC Network Newsletter Vol 6)

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Thurrock Council has just started the journey of building Local Area Coordination alongside local citizens, services and communities as part of their vision for building more welcoming, inclusive and mutually supportive communities.

Local Area Coordination is about citizenship, inclusion, contribution and leadership, therefore finding your preferred LAC must be about real joint working, co production....doing it together.

In Thurrock, they did just that. Local people, statutory services and community organisations came together to find their first Local Area Coordinators.

Here, Kristina Jackson (CEO Thurrock CVS), Neil Woodbridge (Chief Exec Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions) CIC and Tania Sitch (Thurrock Council Fieldwork Services Manager) tell the story of the community led open interview approach.

About Thurrock

Thurrock is a small unitary Authority just to the East of London and nestling between the A13, M25 and the Thames. Way back in 1996 its voluntary and community sector really pushed for the area to become Independent of the Essex Local Authority control, arguing Thurrock had a unique profile that deserved a highly tailored Local Authority. In 1998 this was granted and everyone stepped up to the plate for positive change.

Rolling forward, through many years of development and change this little Authority of 150,000 citizens still packs a major community punch (there are over 500 groups locally). Whoa betide anyone who thinks they can turn up on the doorstep and tell people what to do. The Local Authority concept of securing 4 Local Area Coordinators was thus set upon with some anxiety to get it right and a distinct desire to maximise involvement of everyone.

Real Engagement—Real Contribution—Real Leadership

The Local Authority Managers were keen to get this process right – when they looked at the original applications response to a standard advert they simply couldn't shortlist enough candidates. The steering group were asked to think again and together with CVS and a local Social Enterprise developed a citizen led model of recruitment:

The LA agreed that everyone who expressed an interest in the LAC posts from an advert would be allowed to go through the recruitment process.

This resulted in 105 people being invited to an all day experience! (The administration of which was quite an accomplishment;) but key were the Community Connectors / Citizens of Thurrock and local groups who were invited and supported to lead the decisions. These people were chosen via the local CVS and a local Social Enterprise as people who had most engaged with the sector.

As a result we had approximately 25 community advocates who were clearly involved in their communities as connectors and who spanned a wide variety of experience; from faith groups, disability, mental health, older people, and young people – all of whom came with a desire to bring positive change to Thurrock.

Local People in Control—Working Together

The Community groups were divided up and placed on 4 tables around the large hall in the local CVS building – the candidates were then briefed on mass and divided into small groups of 8. They all had numbers for name badges and the Citizens had cards that they could simply write the numbers on and then piece of paper with a scale of 1-5 written on which to score each Candidate instantly. Each group had a guide who stayed with them and scored also throughout the whole process. A triangle was rung to start and then every 25 minutes afterwards – just like speed dating!

There were a total of 6 tables that the applicants in their groups had to go around – one was to have a three-minute interview at and one was simply called 'Rest' where they could read articles about LAC.

The 4 tables of Citizens had specific tasks to ask the candidates supported by a facilitator. One was to lead a discussion about a proposed local large shopping development, two was to ask them to place post-sticks on a huge map of Thurrock showing what community connections they knew in the local area, Three was to translate a paragraph from a Local Authority document and Four was to discuss "What I love about Thurrock is ...". For each task the candidates took it in turns and only had three minutes to take the lead – all the time being observed by the Citizens and managers from Thurrock.

Tania Sitch

December 2013

It's all about relationships

It was extremely interesting to observe how people did or did not engage with the Community. There were some clear winners and losers. At the end of this process the steering group looked at the collated score and at only this point did a formal panel agree to interview a shortlist of 16 people. From these, 6 candidates in total across the four proposed LAC areas were chosen.

These people were then taken forward and given another final interview with a small group of community leaders from the specific area we wanted them to work in – so the final job offers were made to the Candidates from the Community Connectors in the area within which they would work. True Citizen empowerment.

Where the Community Connectors from the LAC area said no this was respected and the person not appointed.

What people told us

Feedback from both the Candidates and the Citizens who took part has been extremely positive. The situation somehow felt very real to everyone; it wasn't what was written on any application paper it was the ability to engage, to show local knowledge, to deliver passion and to show a genuine interest in local people that allowed the candidates to succeed. People who can't get alongside Citizens, network and make community solution style links needed not to apply!!

It's helping us to do things differently

Footnote: - The Local Authority so engaged with the process that they asked the Community to help them again recently with a similar process in order to recruit their next batch of OT's and Social Workers

Power to the people!!



Appendix C - Stories

These stories represent part of a journey alongside local people, their families and their communities as they build their positive vision for a good life in the future and think about the range of ways of getting there.

Rather than waiting for a person to fall into crisis, the LAC will come alongside people, their families and communities with a greater focus on

- Building a vision for a better future, staying strong and well connected
- Recognising and supporting the strengths, assets, contribution and possibilities of local people and communities
- Building more welcoming, inclusive and mutually supportive communities
- Citizenship and family leadership

Each story with local people involves the full range of LAC roles including

- Information, advice and signposting
- Building circles of support/supportive relationships
- Supporting people to find practical, local low cost/no cost solutions
- Community building and community mapping
- Helping people speak up - advocacy
- Increasing choice and control
- Control over supports and services
- Service coordination and navigation
- Brokerage



Story 1 – Taking Time to get to Know Local Communities Building Local Resources and Connections

1. Raising Awareness of and Supporting Local Community Resources

In his first 3 months, Jon has taken time to get to know his local community to

- find out what is available or already happening
- find out about people and places with gifts, skills and contributions to make
- looking to identify gaps in local opportunities

This has allowed Jon to find out about the natural resources and opportunities in local communities and support people to be part of community life.

The library is a place that Jon has visited regularly and he has started to get to know the staff working there.

Through recent discussions he wanted to know what was happening at the library and if there was any signposting and information of local organisations, events and clubs that the library gave to local people.

It became apparent that the CAB used to work out of the library, but now this had stopped and people were now being signposted to the centre in Grays.

What Happened?

Through his working at the Sure Start Centre, Jon knew that CAB met there on a Friday afternoon in the same town the Library was based.

Through his knowledge of the local area and developing connections, he was able to pass this information to the Library and give a local number for booking appointments.

Individuals, previously directed out of area, would now be able to access the CAB for timely and accurate information in their own town.

2. Accessible Local Information

Also through this discussion it became apparent that the Library used to have a website that they could access which had a database of local clubs for signposting people that had particular interests.

This was no longer active and therefore the library relied on their own knowledge of the area and groups coming into provide information of what was happening leaving leaflets and posters.

What happened?

Through Jon's working relationship with the volunteer service in Thurrock, he knew that they also had a similar website where different groups in Thurrock could be searched.

This again allowed Jon to pass this information on that would assist the Library staff and make their job a little easier when providing information to local residents in search of activities and social groups.

This, in turn, will provide individuals with the knowledge they need to pursue their interests and strengths and widen support networks helping them to stay stronger for longer.

Overcoming Isolation	Access to Health Info	Contribution connection	Being Heard/ Advocacy	Community Building	Service Coordination	Information and Advice
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

ASC	Health	Public Health	CYP	Housing	
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Story 2 Mrs B

Overcoming Isolation, Information, Being Heard, Planning for the Future

Introduction – Mrs B originally referred to Community Solutions with a request for services. Community Solutions introduced Mrs B to LAC

Situation – Mrs B had become increasingly isolated due to a number of health related conditions. She was also extremely anxious about an impending benefits appeal. She had previously attended a similar appeal and lost her case due to her lack of confidence and leaving the session early.

She lives with her son on the first floor in low-rise flats. The Community Solutions team found that Mrs B was neither eligible nor interested in formal day care services.

LAC met Mrs B, took time to get to know her well - her vision for the future, what life was like now and what was important to and for her, now and in the future

She expressed great interest in

- Successfully overcoming her benefits appeal
- Cooking and learning more about growing her own food.
- Working with animals.

What Happened?

Through local knowledge and connections, LAC met with 'Ngage', the local volunteer organisation to see what volunteering opportunities were available around working with animals and also to find out more around how volunteering can affect Mrs B's existing benefits.

- Provided paperwork and DWP documentation about the rules and regulations around volunteering. Mrs B found this information very helpful.
- Researched availability of local allotments and provided the information to Mrs B.
- Supported Mrs B to contact the owner of the allotment site and to visit the site the following week.
- Mrs B met the owner, who in turn indicated he was able to introduce her to various other members of the same site who offered their help, skills, expertise, tools and seeds to help her with all the basics for getting started.

Mrs B immediately felt quite positive that a potential network of new friends could easily be developed and the thought of learning a new skill excited her.

Benefits Appeal

LAC and Mrs B talked about and prepared for the appeal meeting, helping her to plan what she wanted/needed to say and to be alongside her through the journey.

LAC accompanied Mrs B to the hearing, which was successful.

Next Steps

- Mrs B wants to initially focus on getting started with the allotment and decided to put the volunteering on hold.

Looking ahead, Mrs B feels a lot more positive about her future and has proven that with the some support and encouragement she can achieve the goals that bring her closer to her vision of a better life.

Overcoming Isolation	Access to Health Info	Contribution connection	Being Heard/ Advocacy	Community Building	Service Coordination	Information and Advice
✓		✓	✓	✓		✓

ASC	Health	Public Health	CYP	Housing	CCG
✓	✓		✓		✓

Story 3 - Information, Being Heard, Housing, Health and Well-Being, Reducing Isolation

Introduction - LAC was introduced to Mr C by a Family Mosaic floating support worker who was concerned that he was feeling socially isolated.

Situation - Mr C lives in an upstairs flat. Due to an accident a number of years ago, he now has reduced mobility and is now unable to use the stairs or access the community.

LAC visited Mr C for the first time and took time to get to know him, what life was like now and how he would like it to be in the future. He had just been discharged from Hospital, after having a fall whilst attempting to descend the communal stairs in his flats. He had an allocated support planner from the Hospital Social Work Team to arrange care and place him onto the housing waiting list for ground floor accommodation

Mr C has a passionate interest collecting memorabilia and jewellery. He used to love going to auctions and days out where he could browse 'old gems' and artefacts of interest.

Mr C talked about some issues including

- Had been trying, unsuccessfully, to sell his property for some time.
- He had little to no personal support networks around him. He had a weekly visit from a cleaner/shopper and a carer three times a week to attend to his personal care
- Felt let down in the past by various professionals – he had minimal feedback about his potential to move and agreed visits from community nurses and physios had not happened.
- He was not in receipt of any benefits and was finding it a struggle to cope financially. He found the DLA forms difficult and confusing and said that DLA had no record of the completed forms he had previously sent.

What Happened?

Before LAC left Mr C's property for the first time, they agreed that

- he (LAC) would contact his support planner for an update on his housing situation and current availability of first floor sheltered accommodation.
- LAC would contact his worker from Family Mosaic for support help him fill in his DLA forms and post them to the DLA office.

The Family Mosaic worker then arranged for an ex-DWP worker to visit Mr C to help him fill in the DLA forms page by page and gave him the DLA contact number so that he would be able to track his application via telephone.

LAC contacted Mr C's support planner at the hospital and found his application had been transferred to the housing department and that he automatically qualifies for assisted bidding.

LAC gave Mr C the direct number of both his support planner and the assisted bidding department in the housing team so he could check on his progress for a move date at his leisure.

What next?

After visiting Mr C again he advised LAC that he was still struggling to sell his flat and he thought he may be able to sell it quicker if his flat was a little more organised but was unable to do this himself.

LAC agreed to support Mr C

- Connect with Ngage, a local organisation that recruits volunteers in the community, and the local Salvation Army to seek help to organise his possessions into boxes and make the house look more appealing to buyers.
- Once Mr C is successful in his bidding for a ground floor property Mr C has expressed a desire to become more of a part of his local community and would like support in achieving this goal.

Overcoming Isolation	Access to Health Info	Contribution connection	Being Heard/ Advocacy	Community Building	Service Coordination	Information and Advice
✓		✓	✓		✓	✓

ASC	Health	Public Health	CYP	Housing	CCG
✓	✓			✓	✓

Tania Sitch

December 2013

Story 4 - Supporting an Older Person to Plan for the Future, Information, Coordinate Services

Introduction

LAC introduced to 84 year old lady by the manager at South Ockendon Community Hub

Situation

Concerns that Mrs D was losing mobility, had a number of falls and was waiting for sheltered housing. She was also having difficulty selling her flat, planning for the move, notifying utility providers etc. Together, the LAC and Mrs D identified some things that were important.

- Arranging change of address with utilities and other services
- Arranging furniture removal

What Happened Next?

- LAC Supported Mrs D to plan for and contact all providers to notify change of address
- Secured one off funding from Thurrock Housing to support furniture removal

Mrs D has now moved to a warden controlled flat.

What Next?

LAC and Mrs D are now exploring how she would like life to be in the future and some of the ways of making it happen

Supporting Mrs D to make a move meant much more than just contacting utility providers and calling in a removal firm. It was important to recognise, understand and walk alongside her through a big life change.

Summary

Overcoming Isolation	Planning for Future	Contribution/ connection	Being Heard/ Advocacy	Community Building	Service Coordination	Information and Advice
✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

ASC	Health	Public Health	CYP	Housing	
✓	✓			✓	

Story 5 - Helping People to Have a Voice and Be Heard

Introduction

LAC was introduced to Mr E via email by a local Councillor.

Situation

Mr E suffered a significant stroke earlier this year and has subsequently found living in his current property difficult. He has felt like he has been “passed from pillar to post” and received masses of conflicting information in relation to moving on medical grounds.

Mr E had been trying to move to a property that would better meet increasing health needs, but had been rejected based on “local connection.” There were concerns that the process was causing distress and increasing health needs.

LAC took time to get to know Mr E, what was important to him and to explore some of his aspirations and key priorities. His main aspiration was to move to more suitable housing and have help to navigate the service system and appeal process.

What Happened Next?

- LAC and Mr E began to plan appealing decision by Thurrock Home Choices.
- He was supported to contact an advocate at the Beehive.
- The advocate supported him to complete housing appeal.
- Mr DP won the appeal for his name to be included on the housing register, but as a low priority.

What Next?

The Local Area Coordinator, Councillor and his advocate are now working together with Mr E for a band change based on his present medical condition, and to facilitate his move from the present accommodation.

Summary

Overcoming Isolation	Planning for Future	Contribution/ connection	Being Heard/ Advocacy	Community Building	Service Coordination	Information and Advice
✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

ASC	Health	Public Health	CYP	Housing	
✓	✓			✓	

Story 6 - Being Heard, Service Coordination, Problem Solving, Connecting with Neighbours

Introduction

Introduced to Mr F via email from the Mayor's Office

Situation

LAC met with Mr F and they talked about how life was like now and how he would like it to be in the future.

Mr F has recently moved into the area, and does not know anyone. He regularly attends hospital for treatment of medical conditions.

He identified some key issues that he would like help to resolve including

- Losing his rubbish bins
- People throwing things at his bungalow
- People breaking his fence at the side of his house, reducing access and making it difficult take his wheelie bin to the back of the house for easier access and protection from theft.

What Happened?

With support from the LAC, Mr F

- contacted the repair team for broken chestnut fence,
- contacted council waste department for missed blue wheelie bin replacement,
- purchase paint to label brown and green bins and
- contact number for antisocial behaviour (left telephone number for him to contact Community Safety Team, whenever he needs support).

What Next?

At this stage, Mr F does not want continued LAC support. LAC gave him his contact details in case needed in the future.

- The Local Area Coordinator is also trying to connect Mr F with one of his neighbours, to help with moving the bins down the side entrance.
- The LAC will keep in contact with Mr F in the future to see how life is and to let him know he is still around in his community should he wish to think about the future, do new things or overcome some problems.

Overcoming Isolation	Planning for Future	Contribution connection	Being Heard/ Advocacy	Community Building	Service Coordination	Information and Advice
✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

ASC	Health	Public Health	CYP	Housing
✓	✓			✓

Story 7 - Being In Control, Solving Problems, Information

Introduction

Mrs I was introduced to LAC through a local agency that assists the elderly.

Situation

Mrs I's sister had recently passed away. This had led to her having to deal with many issues including funeral preparations and handling all that was left behind by the deceased relative.

Upon visiting Mrs I we briefly explained what Local Area Coordination was and wanted to find out what was important to Mrs I at this difficult time. At first, it was hard to determine what the priorities for her as there seemed to be so much to deal with and the individual had a large bag of post.

What Happened?

- ✓ One item of post that Mrs I was concerned about was from the DWP and she didn't know what she had to do with it. We were able to look at this and identify that it was confirmation that she had informed the DWP of her sister's death and with this, there was a checklist provided showing what next steps needed to be taken when an individual has died. By going through the checklist with Mrs I we were able to identify that the majority of the items had already been completed and Mrs I was now waiting for responses to many of her letters.
- ✓ We were able to identify a few additional priorities from the check list including visiting the bank to follow up with her sister's bank account and re-directing post from her sister's address.
- ✓ Also another issue that was causing some stress to Mrs I was an insurance claim that Mrs I was struggling to complete and return accordingly. I sat with Mrs I and she was able to show me all the areas of the form that she was having trouble filling in due to her either not having the information or not knowing what that section meant. I was also able to show Mrs I the customer services telephone number of the insurance company from some of the correspondence and she was then able to ring them. Throughout the phone call, I was able to point to the bits on the form that she had put question marks next to and she was then able to ask the relevant questions to the individual over the phone who clarified how she should complete the form.

What's Next?

We were able to leave Mrs I with some clear priorities of what to do next and agreed that we would call her again early the next week to check how she was getting on and see if there was any further support that was needed.

Problem Solving	Access to Health Info	Contribution connection	Being Heard/ Advocacy	Community Building	Being In Control	Information and Advice
✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

ASC	Health	Public Health	CYP/Education	Housing	CCG
	✓				