local area coordination®

Local Area Coordination and ABCD –

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• Tinker or Reform? The Choice for

т Social Care and Health Services ② June 15, 2012

Development)

English

We are now at the crossroads in social care and health services and also in our local communities.

by Ralph Broad (Director Inclusive Neighbourhoods) and Cormac Russell (Director Nurture

A "crossroad" presents us with a set of questions. Here are some of the interrelated questions that are exercising us:

2. Can Personalisation and Personal Budgets solve all our social care problems? 3. Do we continue to just cut services and tighten eligibility, risking increasing crises,

1. Is Personalisation dead?

4. Do we further complicate the system by just adding new, often disconnected, service initiatives but keep the system and balance of power the same?

dependency, unmet need and exclusion in our local communities?

- 5. Do we continue to tinker with existing professional roles, adding in new responsibilities and often making the roles (and service system) more complicated, less focused, less satisfying (for professionals involved) and moving them away from their original principles
- and vision?
- We believe the answer to each is "no"

Having answered accordingly, some high level solutions present even before we go down one

3. Work together to recognise and nurture their gifts, skills, passion and aspirations 4. Support people to develop their own personal vision for a good life and the range of ways

1. Don't wait for people to fall into crisis

pathway or another:

health reform.

and John L. McKnight.

of those on the margins.

decision making

and practical solutions

Reform Not Tinker

resources as the primary source of support.

services.

families

they can get there. 5. Maximise the effectiveness and value of specialist services as aback up to local, practical

- (non service) solutions and connect people who need resources or services more quickly and simply

on deficits of local people, defining people by what they can't do, and applying services or

money for solutions to those deficits. This has created a dependency culture, with people

2. Don't judge or label local people and local communities on perceived deficits

- Over many years, the health and social care system in Britain has become very fragmented and difficult to navigate (for both people/families and professionals) and has focused predominantly
- labelled as passive recipients of social care funding or services; and accordingly viewing themselves as supplicant.

viewed as "clients", "service users" or "customers" of a social care system and often negatively

Local Area Coordination (LAC) and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) are two approaches developing in the UK aimed at paving a clear path for citizens and policy makers away from "clientelism" and towards active citizenship. In practice, both approaches aim to nurture individual, family and community strengths to build stronger, more welcoming and more inclusive communities and, in a broader ideological sense, supporting the re imagining of social care and health services

Local Area Co-ordination (LAC) was originally developed in Western Australia in 1988 by Eddie

inherent expertise and strengths of people, irrespective of service labels, to plan, control and

contribute to their own lives and the well being of their community. It also acted as a catalyst for

service and systems reform, making services more personal, flexible, accountable and efficient,

nurturing practical, local solutions as the "primary source of support" and pushing services back

a level. It has subsequently been developed across Australia and internationally, including sites

now developing in England and conversations underway in Wales as part of social care and

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD), was established in 1995 by the

Community Development Program at Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research, is

built upon three decades of community development research by Professors Jody Kretzmann

Bartnik and the Disability Services Commission, with assumptions and beliefs around the

The mutualisation of both approaches is now well advanced under the guidance of the authors of this blog. Building on long term, evidence based and innovative frameworks, these innovative approaches to supporting local citizens and communities to build and pursue their vision for a strong, mutually supportive community offer tangible answers to the five questions at the beginning of this piece. The combination balances the need to "come alongside" people who are vulnerable through age, frailty, disability or mental health issues to achieve their vision for a good life, with a community building approach which increase the competency of the wider

This maximises the opportunity for those who are most vulnerable to stay strong, use and share

their personal strengths, maintain good health and personal relationships, to support people to

be part of, and contribute to, their communities and to strengthen the capacity of communities

to welcome and include people. At the same time, communities are identifying, connecting and

mobilising their collective assets for the well-being of all members of the community, inclusive

This combined offer presents as a powerful catalyst for service and systems reform, forming the

new "front end" of the service system, moving the focus from assessment, funding and services

to prevention, community building and local solutions, with formal services and specialist roles

moving back as a "back up" to local solutions (as per "A Vision for Adult Social Care, DH, 2011).

community to co create healthier, more prosperous and hospitable communities

Making it Real: Operationalising the Vision Local Area Coordination is underpinned by 10 Core Principles and these are delivered and support by the Local Area Coordination Framework. These principles underline

• The importance of access to relevant, timely and accessible information to inform

Recognising and nurturing individual, family and community gifts and assets Recognising the natural expertise and leadership people labelled as vulnerable and their

The right to citizenship, responsibilities and opportunities

The importance of valued relationships and personal networks

 The right to plan, choose and control supports and resources • The value and complementary nature of formal services as a back up to natural supports

The LAC Framework supports the design, development, implementation and accountability/outcomes of Local Area Coordination. See "From Service Users to Citizens" (due late April 2012) or contact Inclusive Neighbourhoods for more information or support.

Short Cuts Don't Work – A Real Opportunity to

Local Area Coordination is NOT about adding a few tasks on to existing social work roles or just a variation on community based social work.

It (LAC) becomes the new "front end" of the service system, pushing formal services back a

level, connecting service and age types and focusing on people, families, communities.

It focuses on assets, strengthening individuals/families/communities, practical (non service) solutions, with social work and other specialist services as robust, focused, valued back up

It is very different from, but works in partnership with, social work and statutory functions

It provides the context for re thinking the roles and desired outcomes of specialist and funded

services, with an intentional preventative approach at the front end, nurturing local community

their roles in supporting people to stay strong or solve problems. As a "cradle to grave" approach, embedded in local communities and developing lasting

relationships with local people, it also provides the opportunity to simplify the service system

for local people (a genuine single, local, accessible point of contact in the local community –

The challenge is to make sure that "salami slicing" of services to save money is not the only

approach and that any new initiatives don't further complicate the system, have an evidence

and people becoming more vulnerable. It will place further pressure on services that are already

connecting and mobilising individual, family and community strengths as an important part of

LAC and ABCD also provide the opportunity for all professionals to think about identifying,

base and sound methodology for inclusion, non service solutions, strengthening communities and contribute to reforming existing services. Merely cutting services, without attention and investment in alternatives, substantially increases the risks of further isolation, exclusion, crises

struggling to cope – an accident waiting to happen

across service types) and connecting/integrating service types.

Opportunities for Wider Reform

Local Area Coordination/Asset Based Community Development and reform will require positive values and assumptions about local citizens and communities, long term commitment, leadership and vision, with real contribution and partnership with local people. A significant

portion of this reform will require a sea change in attitude among managerial classes about the

unique competencies of communities in the areas of health, safety, care for the environment,

place/locale, building strong communities, civic action towards deeper democracy and a more

just society, response to emergencies and co-producing knowledge and the limitations of

safe food production and consumption, local economic development, ageing well in a

system based responses in those domains Local Area Coordination and Asset Based Community Development are about starting conversations and building connections. They are about

keeping communities strong so that they are competent enough as active citizens to

having positive values and assumptions about people labelled as vulnerable and our local

• acknowledging and supporting the value of services and money, when delivered at the

right time, in the right place and for the right reasons – as a back up to local natural

Providing better ambulances at the bottom of the cliff instead of fences at the top is a half-

baked and wasteful endeavour for policy makers and practitioners alike. This reflection piece,

therefore, concerned itself with the means by which, with labelled people in the lead, families,

communities and agencies can co-create better fences before the precipice, and ensure that a

good life is nurtured well before people reach the "edge". To ensure people can seek a life of

Conclusion

It's about more than services, money and negative labels.

sustain and keep each other strong

people coming together – mutual support

building strong, welcoming and inclusive communities

communities.

social justice

solutions

their own choosing, we assert that a combined LAC/ABCD approach will prove more fruitful

contributions of others in kind.

legacy of their decision: Do we tinker or reform?

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than current isolated deficit based approaches, exclusively concerned as they are, with the needs and problems of an increasingly growing vulnerable population. A good life, across the life-course, in one's own place, in a way that feels productive, surrounded by family, friends and neighbours, is everyone's business and is worthy of greater attention than is currently being afforded to this simple, powerful ambition. The central crisis of modern health and social care system is our neglect of the task of building hospitable, competent communities where everyone can contribute their talents, skills and knowledge, while receiving the

And so, in the final analysis we are faced with one fundamental question: "Do we support communities and local people to build and pursue their personal and community vision and simplify services and systems to make them more personal, relevant, flexible, facilitative and accountable, or continue to tinker at the edges and adjust existing roles and services?"

The answer will define all our futures; policy makers would do well to realise they will live long

enough and across the life course be at one point or another vulnerable enough to inherit the

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