

Gateshead Health and Social Care Partnership

12th March 2009

'Your Life, Your Way' Action Plan - Progress Report

Background

The publication of the Government policy statement on the future of community services – *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* – in 2006 was an opportunity to establish a vision for the future shape of social care in Gateshead. This took the form of a series of statements of intent about how the objectives of *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* could be made a reality in the coming years.

During summer and autumn 2007 an extensive consultation was carried out in Gateshead on the vision, under the title *Your Life, Your Way*. A draft Action Plan to implement the vision and the consultation priorities was produced. The Action Plan is linked to a wide range of other strategies and initiatives in Gateshead, reflecting the comprehensive nature of the new agenda for adult social care.

The Vision Action Plan demonstrates inter-organisational working towards common goals and therefore provides evidence for the Local Area Agreement and the performance assessment of the statutory agencies.

It was discussed by the HSCP in February 2008 before being agreed by the Council Cabinet in March 2008. The HSCP agreed to receive reports on the progress of the Action Plan.

This paper reports on progress since Cabinet approved the Action Plan.

Links

The Action Plan is linked to a wide range of other strategies and initiatives in Gateshead, reflecting the comprehensive nature of the new agenda for adult social care. Collectively, these initiatives contribute to much of the realisation of the vision for adult social care and a major task will be to co-ordinate the reporting of them so that progress as a whole can be discussed

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Putting People First

The 2007 Government statement *Putting People First* re-iterated that, ultimately, every locality should seek to have a single community based support system focused on the health and wellbeing of the local population. This should be achieved by binding

together local government, primary care, community based health provision, public health, social care and the wider issues of housing, employment, benefits advice and education/training. The Vision Action Plan is clearly a means to take this forward.

Vision 2030

Your Life, Your Way supports the objectives of *Vision 2030*: ‘City of Gateshead’, ‘Creative Gateshead’, ‘Active and Healthy Gateshead’, ‘Sustainable Gateshead’, and ‘Gateshead Volunteers.’ ‘Active and Healthy Gateshead’ through the delivery of support designed to increase independence, improve personal health and well-being, stimulate personal choice and reduce overall health and social care inequalities in the Borough. The Action Plan recognises the valuable role and importance of “Gateshead Volunteers” and the need to continue to stimulate their active participation.

The objectives of a ‘Sustainable Gateshead’ and ‘City of Gateshead’ will gain from the Action Plan’s commitment to promote employment opportunities and social enterprise for people with disabilities, and to support social inclusion wherever possible.

New Challenges

Since the publication of ‘*Our Health, Our Care, Our Say*’ Ministers have confirmed, through *Putting People First* and other statements that the priorities for Councils with social care responsibilities should be:

- Personalisation
- Prevention
- Strong Commissioning

These national issues will be crucial too:

- The extent of Councils’ change management capacity for the major shift represented by personalisation
- Significant workforce development will be required
- 3% annual efficiency savings must be achieved, in the context of rising demands for social care and a poor economic outlook overall
- Mechanisms must be found to transfer resources from the acute services to prevention

Method

This report offers a snapshot of key activities from the Action Plan that relate directly to the local and national visions for adult social care. They follow the seven aims and outcomes of the Action Plan, and as in the original they crosscut each other in reflection of the crosscutting nature of the new social care agenda. A draft of the report has been discussed with the key Sub-Partnerships of the HSCP.

Aim 1: Improved Health and Emotional Well Being

Impact on User or Family Carer: *We want to provide support and opportunities for individuals, groups and communities to have more control and influence over their health and emotional well-being. A focus on prevention will be central.*

Following the successful evaluation of Gateshead's pioneering and inter-agency 'Link Up' pilots in 2008, funding for several innovative projects for older people has continued. These include the Older People's Assembly, the 'Time Banks' scheme managed by Age Concern, and the Rowlands Gill Live at Home Scheme. Gateshead Housing Company is continuing its handyman scheme, and the Council Community Health Team has taken up the community health activities for older people.

The Council circulated a strategy for the development of assistive technology and telecare in Gateshead for consultation at the end of 2008. This aimed at involving all the stakeholders and covered all client groups.

Confining entry to specialist services or interventions to those assessed as in need of them also means that others may be referred to other organisations for advice or services. Voluntary organisations have been involved in an information day for social care staff. This aimed to promote signposting to other services by giving staff knowledge about what was available and build trust in the voluntary sector, by demonstrating confidence and ability to deliver. Staff need to have this confidence before effective signposting will happen; again this is relevant to all client groups.

A Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee has examined mental health and well-being issues and services in Gateshead and will produce an action plan in 2009. This follows its ongoing focus on inequalities in health in the borough.

As regards adaptations central government has acknowledged that the Disability Facilities Grant has, historically, been lower than it should have been. It has acknowledged the gap between available resources and the known need. The Disability Facilities Grant to Gateshead from the Department for Communities and Local Government has increased from £710k in 2007/08 to £1.3m in 2008/09. The increase will help to deal with the backlog of adaptations that have been approved but have not yet started; how far it will be sustained to help to meet future need remains to be seen.

There is not enough accessible housing. This is especially the case for people with complex needs, who may need hoists, height adjustable equipment, and storage space for equipment. The Council has an agreement with housing providers that 'Homes for Life' principles will be part of the design brief for town centre developments and some other new builds. The timescales for building are to be confirmed and there is the danger of a 'credit crunch' effect on new developments.

The Council began a review of the adaptations service in response to user concerns. Gateshead Access Panel is involved and it is intended to extend this user representation. By February 2009 the review will have established standardised referral and assessment forms, clear policies and timescales for major adaptations, a quality assurance process for all works, and a performance monitoring system with the Gateshead Housing Company.

Aim 2: Improved Quality of Life

Impact on User or Family Carer: *Our aim is for more people, including family carers, to participate in their communities, have work and leisure, and the opportunity to feel fulfilled and valued.*

The key term 'personalisation' is a means to an end: to deliver independent living and to enable people who need support to make best use of their own and other resources to live as active citizens. People will be supported to understand the money and community resources that are available to them and will be encouraged to use these imaginatively to meet their needs. By putting the citizen at the heart of the decision-making process, they will enable the transformation of the way that social care is provided.

The Council now has two Project managers, reporting to the Personalisation Partnership, to take forward the move towards personalised services. Although this will build on the experience of earlier pilots it is a great deal wider than the rollout of Individual Budgets. It is expected to mean: much less staff time devoted to assessment, in favour of far more supported self-assessment, and a greater ability to choose and control services through the option of a personal budget. Central government expects significant progress to be made on personalisation by 2011.

A stakeholder consultation and information event on personalisation will be held in March 2009.

Part of the infrastructure of social inclusion mentioned above, and even prevention, are community centres that are able to provide information and offer activities at appropriate times. The Community Centres Development Team began to be in place from October 2008 and each member liaises with a community centre management committee over the implementation of their development plans.

These management committees are locally elected and responsible for developing the programmes in their centres. The aim is for these to be based on local needs derived from local knowledge and consultation. In practice now this varies, and not all centres are consistently meeting a cross section of needs in their areas. This is an issue for the Community Centres Development Team.

Most centres are accessible in the sense of ramps and accessible toilets but there is still more work to do in other respects, such as hearing loops.

Staffing at centres mean that users with special needs would benefit more from bringing their support with them rather than services assuming the centres can provide it.

Schools too have the potential for wider community uses and this is done in a number of them. Council access audits on buildings have picked up car parks, toilets and door entry in schools as issues to be addressed before their potential for inclusion can be realised.

Another crucial piece of infrastructure for inclusion, participation, access to services and job finding is public transport. Transport to and from the centres will remain an issue in Gateshead, and centres will be dependent on their users coming to them. Even where concessionary travel passes can be used there are difficulties in Gateshead of how to get to and from public transport. This, the costs, and the time involved should be borne in mind when encouraging people with disabilities back to work.

Nexus representatives attend Area Forum meetings and this enables transport matters to be raised and discussed at them. Gateshead Access Panel has raised the regular failure of lifts on the Metro system and the ban on unaccompanied people using powered wheel chairs.

GAP report that the bus companies are responsive: there can be problems of driver awareness and training, particularly during staff change, but the companies do take up feedback. GAP also uses the tactic of encouraging service users to press for “reasonable adjustments” through the licensing authority, with taxi companies.

Aim 3: Making a Positive Contribution

Impact on User or Family Carer: We want to enable people, including our most vulnerable adults, to contribute to their community, family and friendships

Volunteering can be a route back to employment, an aid to mental health recovery and a means of inclusion as well as an opportunity to contribute to the community. During the 2008 Year of the Volunteer a working group including the Council, GVOG, the Older People’s Assembly, Gateshead Access Panel and Job Centre Plus secured funding for a variety of activities to raise the profile of volunteering. GAP too has raised the profile of volunteers with disabilities. The working group will review its role early in 2009 with a view to sustaining the partnership.

A Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee is examining what will be involved in promoting volunteering in Gateshead and it will produce an action plan for priorities and resources early in 2009. The resource issue will be vital because volunteers have to be recruited, trained and supported, and this involves cost.

Job Centre Plus has clarified the rules regarding volunteering, benefits, and ability to work. Campaigning about this traditional obstacle to volunteering has been hindered by the fact that individual cases and examples can be different, but the Government’s recent benefits-to-work initiative has accepted that legislative change is needed. The approach of individual Job Centre staff towards interpreting the rules can still be crucial.

The CRB checking for voluntary organisations will be simplified after October 2009, and this too will ease the path for potential volunteers. The impact of the Safeguarding Authority on checking systems for volunteers remains to be seen.

The Age Concern ‘Time banks’ project, initiated through ‘Link Up’ is successfully involving older people in a different form of volunteering by exchanging skills within their communities and joining together to reduce social isolation.

Aim 4: Increased Choice and Control

Impact on User or Family Carer: *Our aim is that accessible information and support is available to help people to make informed decisions about how their care can best be delivered*

A review of advocacy services in Gateshead has been completed. Among the recommendations are that the Council adopts a corporate approach to supporting advocacy rather than assume it is just the province of health and social care. Also, to encourage voluntary organisations to co-operate to make the best use of their volunteer advocate resources. It is recognised that Gateshead voluntary organisations carry out a great deal of unofficial advocacy work too, for which no funding is received.

The projected expansion in personalised services will need to be accompanied for some time by an expansion in advocacy opportunities, to ensure that choice and personalisation are genuine.

The Council and partners are increasing their use of web-based information, for example the 'Link Age' site, which can provide older people with information about services and activities. Consultation indicated that 'Council News' is an appreciated source of information and this will continue to be used. Access to Information and Reading Services (AIRS) continues to expand the number of people receiving talking newspapers, and receiving 'Council News' in varied formats.

It is proposed to develop a podcast using the Link Up DVD that will be accessible on the Gateshead Council and Link Up websites to promote the partnership. It is an opportunity to see a more modern approach to people aged 50+ accessing information from all the partners involved. The DVD has been presented around a number of national events entitled 'Putting Older People First', aimed at organisations and local authorities explaining the principles of Link Up, its benefits and how it can be set up across the country.

There have been successful inter-generational events between the Older People's Assembly and the Youth Assembly, which have included the young people helping the other Assembly members to use IT and mobile phones. These initiatives combine community cohesion with improving access to sources of information.

The Gateshead Housing Company has produced a leaflet for tenants to explain the adaptations system, and it is working on further accessible formats for it.

A commissioning priority from 2008 will be to continue to develop the social care market and attract new providers. This will be essential to ensure that users have a genuine choice of service and thus raise the quality of provision.

Mental health service users have promoted the 'clubhouse' model of social care services for them. This means user-led activities to support people into work, voluntary activity and social enterprise. Gateshead Mental Health User Forum produced a business plan for a local clubhouse and the Council has agreed on a disused day centre (Worcester Green) as a site. Tenders for a host organisation will be considered in 2009.

The Council Trading Standards Section will establish an Accredited Traders Scheme at the suggestion of the Link Up Partnership. By providing information about reliable firms and trades people this will help older and disabled people to make the right choices, and maintain their independence at home.

Aim 5: Freedom from Discrimination and Harassment

Impact on User or Family Carer: *We will promote equality through showing respect for all, providing personalised services and promoting the equalities agenda for everybody*

The Council Cabinet approved the Children with Special Educational Needs Inclusion Review and implementation began in September 2008. Early priorities are to establish early years provision for children with SEN or disabilities in mainstream settings, and to finalise the arrangements for the additionally resourced mainstream schools. A Special Educational Needs Partnership will be established to take the review forward. Success will require funding for staff, support, and accessibility.

Schools already have policies towards disability awareness and integration.

An access audit has been conducted on every building where a Council service is provided. A log of any access barriers has been created and an action plan agreed with managers and the GAP user involvement forum. The log includes both works and organisational or procedural issues. The Corporate Asset Management Group decides annual priorities for works. In 2008 the priority has been village halls/community centres. As previously mentioned this will help to expand the range of activities that can take place in them and also help to create more accessible venues outside Gateshead centre.

Other priorities are to complete access for libraries, children's centres and urban parks. All Gateshead primary schools will have reached BS8300 by 2010. All Development and Enterprise projects go through the GAP involvement meetings.

The Housing Company has achieved funding (as part of the decent homes standard renovations) to improve access in the communal areas of multi-story apartment blocks: lift upgrading, door entry systems, automatic doors, car parks.

The 'Changing Places' campaign in Gateshead has influenced the accessibility of toilets and changing rooms in the new Children's Centres, Leisure Centres, and libraries.

The Council and Nexus achieved a Success in Partnership Working Award for the Towards Independent Travel Service. The service provides training and support for adults with learning disabilities so that they can use public transport independently. This will help to promote inclusion and access to services. There is an obvious potential to extend this scheme to other client groups but that will need to be resourced.

Whereas dropped kerbs – integral to independent travel by powered wheelchair - are automatic in new developments, the Council programme for installing them in existing

kerbs is determined by affordability and the budget is too small to meet the level of demand.

The BME Forum, which has acted as a reference group for the Learning Disability Partnership is now linked to the other Partnerships to act as a reference group for them too. This is designed to contribute BME perspectives to the service development work of the Partnerships.

Aim 6: Maintain Personal Dignity and Respect

Impact on User or Family Carer: *We want individuals, family carers and communities to experience standards of care that respect them and allow them to make choices and take decisions.*

Service users and carers are not systematically involved in commissioning. But this is likely to change with the forthcoming re-organisation and additional resources to strengthen the social care commissioning function in the Council.

In the meantime there are models of good practice in Gateshead and the task will be to make this good practice standard practice. In the last year reviews of sheltered accommodation and day services for older people funded through the Supporting People Programme have been carried out. Each review involved service users: a group exercise, discussions with individuals, and questionnaire surveys. These were in addition to the rolling programme of Supporting People service reviews, which similarly involve service users who have been trained to carry them out. There is also an annual Supporting People Programme Inclusive Forum.

Accommodation and support providers funded through the Supporting People Programme are contractually obliged to have consultation and involvement arrangements in their services. Older people have reported that they feel more in control of priorities for repairs and the social activities provided for them through their involvement.

Outside Supporting People the planned review of the Involvement Strategy in 2008/09 will move beyond social care to cover all of Community Based Services – Learning and Children, in line with *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* outcomes. The 'Involved and Equal' training for service users and carers will continue in 2008/09, with the Involvement Forum defining its own syllabus. An expenses policy for users and carers (jointly agreed with the PCT) is in place. The discussion with the Council Human Resource function about involving users in staff recruitment and selection will be revived.

The Gateshead Local Involvement Network (LINK) will be a vehicle for user, carer and community groups to influence health and social care commissioning. The LINK has agreed an initial work programme with mental health, carer support, residential care and hospital discharge procedures as the focus.

Between 2008 and 2011 the programme of social care contract reviews will be refreshed with the aim of monitoring risk management, quality and outcomes. This will be a crucial part of the infrastructure to achieve this Aim.

Gateshead is one of the pathfinder pilots for young carers' projects; an Inter-Agency Strategy for Young Carers Support will be developed for consultation by summer 2009.

A programme of Positive Risk Taking training will be carried out from 2008/09, so that managers, operational staff and commissioners will appreciate choice and independence for service users. This will be a key philosophy for services.

Aim 7: Economic Well Being

Impact on User or Family Carer: *We will increase the opportunities for people to improve their financial circumstances*

The current economic recession means that service aspirations and national targets to support people with disabilities, especially mental health problems, back into work will be too ambitious. At the same time there will be more focus on jobs and job support in the statutory sector if the private sector shrinks further.

The Council Human Resources Service has agreed to use *Directions* as the recruitment agency of choice. This means that people with disabilities will have a direct line to Council vacancies.

An objective for social care staff from 2008/09 is to ensure a consistent approach to linking work or volunteering opportunities to care plans, and to ensure that providers are aware of the objectives of the local "Work is an Option" strategy. The working group driving this strategy will include disability organisations.

Pathways to Work, the project designed to help people to come off sickness benefit and get back into work, was highly commended at a national awards ceremony. Since 2004 it has helped over 1,000 long-term unemployed local people - not only ill and disabled people but also those over 50 years of age and lone parents - to move from benefits into employment. It provides one-to-one support and liaison with local employers. It also provides support to help people to stay in their jobs.

The Council Development and Enterprise section is supporting the growth of 100 new social enterprise businesses in areas that include citizenship and health and social care. There has been a successful bid to the Social Care Reform Grant to link social enterprises, personalisation and commissioning through a user-led "Peer Advocacy Social Enterprise". Members, initially attached to a third sector organisation, will be in receipt of Personal Budgets themselves and will deliver mentoring and advice to other Personal Budget holders seeking a social enterprise to deliver their social care.

The Council with partners will develop a Financial Inclusion Strategy early in 2009. Maximising the incomes of carers and vulnerable adults will be a feature of it. The Strategy will recognise that the voluntary sector is a major provider of financial advice.

A 'Link Age' project that will continue is the involvement of the Department of Work and Pensions and the local Pensions Service in promoting the Community Care Grant Benefit. This has led to a significant take-up of the Grant

Conclusion

Although problems remain activity is taking place around a very wide range of issues in Gateshead and, taken together, they amount to progress towards realising the vision for the future of adult social care. A number of practical elements need to be in place before personalisation and inclusion – vital aspects of prevention – can develop:

- Better access to public transport
- Better access to facilities and services, both statutory and informal
- Continuing and increasing resources for volunteering, participation and support to work.
- Appropriate information about services and facilities.

These issues cut across all the client groups represented by the Sub-Partnerships. Therefore organised collaboration between the Sub-Partnerships on taking them forward and sharing information about developments should be established.

Recommendation

The HSCP is asked to:

1. Discuss the progress being made towards achieving '*Your Life, Your Way*'.
2. Discuss how the Sub-Partnerships can collaborate to take forward the elements of personalisation, inclusion and prevention.