



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

Independent Review of the Supporting People Programme Transition Year

Research Summary

Social research

Number: 86/2014

Summary:

In March 2014, Miller Research Ltd in association with Shelter Cymru were commissioned by Welsh Government to undertake an independent review of the Supporting People Programme following its transition to new structures in 2012.

The aim of the research was to review the various structures underpinning the Supporting People Programme since the implementation of the re-launched programme in August 2012 and to make recommendations regarding their future.

Objectives and method:

The objectives of the Review were to:

- i. Assess the effectiveness of the programme planning and commissioning arrangements for Supporting People, in terms of (both at local and national level):
 - Planning and commissioning structure and interrelation between national, regional and local arrangements
 - Membership
 - Engagement
 - Impact/Influence
 - Stakeholder awareness
 - Delivery of regional commissioning
- ii. Identify best practice and innovation.
- iii. Identify areas for improvement or action.
- iv. Prioritise recommendations regarding the future of the programme.

The research programme comprised: a desk review of key documents relating to the programme; semi-structured interviews with 82 individuals involved in the management and delivery of the programme at regional and national levels;

and group interviews/ workshops with Cymorth Cymru, Supporting People Information Network (SPIN) and Regional Development Coordinators (RDC).

Findings:

The potential of the post Aylward Supporting People Programme structures is recognised and there is a strong will to make regional collaboration and co-production work for the benefit of some of the most vulnerable groups in society. The SPNAB and RCCs have been praised for raising the profile of the Programme both within local and national government and with partner statutory organisations.

The role of the SPNAB is seen as crucial in providing strategic oversight and leadership for the Programme. It draws its membership from a range of stakeholder and partnership organisations although understanding and engagement of some members is variable. There are perceptions that the SPNAB has become overly involved in the operational detail of the Programme and that it needs to

provide more leadership for the Programme.

The role and remit of the Programme's Steering Board is unclear with suggestions that it is duplicating many of the discussions held at the SPNAB. While the workstreams are seen as important there is a lack of clarity regarding their membership, outputs, timescales and accountability.

RCCs have brought together a range of regional stakeholders, delivery partners and statutory partner organisations. There is a lack of clarity amongst some stakeholders about RCC function and expectations of their performance. Furthermore there are perceptions that RCCs have been required to frequently (and often unnecessarily) report to the SPNAB with little feedback in return. The Programme's high level principles are vague and it has been challenging for RCCs to assess their performance against them.

The extent of regional commissioning taken place to date has been varied and influenced by historical arrangements for the

Programme in each region, with more activity in areas with a tradition of regional working such as North Wales and Gwent.

RCCs are perceived to: lack the power or authority to make decisions and hold members to account (e.g. many of the current Regional Commissioning Plans are based on an amalgamation of Local Commissioning Plans); lack understanding to scrutinise and challenge as not all members fully understand the Programme and/ or the wider regional strategic context; and increase bureaucracy and workload for many of their members.

Areas such as Gwent and North Wales have a legacy of regional collaborative working pre-dating the introduction of the post Aylward structures that took many years to develop, consequently effective collaboration amongst RCC members in other areas is likely to take some time to 'bed in'. Most RCC activity has been around developing member understanding, developing priorities and needs assessment with more progress being made in RCCs where there

has been a tradition of regional working. Regional and sub-regional schemes have been commissioned or extended in Cwm Taf, Gwent, Mid and West and North Wales RCCs.

RCC membership is seen as representative of regional stakeholders; however there is a lack consensus over whether it would be more beneficial for RCC members to be senior officers with knowledge of wider regional strategies, budgetary and decision making powers or operational officers with an in depth knowledge and understanding of the Programme. In some RCCs input and understanding of statutory partner organisation members is variable.

The organisational role of the RCC Chair (e.g. cabinet member, provider or senior officer) is seen as less important than the need to have the appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies to undertake the role.

The Regional Development Coordinator (RDC) role is integral to the RCC but there is a lack of

clarity over the role and variation in its function across RCCs.

The emphasis on service user engagement in the Programme has been recognised although it has proved challenging to implement given the extent of the client groups covered. RCCs have adopted a range of methods often drawing on existing fora to engage service users.

Recommendations:

The current Supporting People Programme structures should be retained and revisited once decisions have been made regarding the recommendations made by the Williams Review in relation to the reorganisation of local government.

The strategic vision for the Programme should be clarified and communicated. This will drive the structures, governance, management and delivery of the Programme and address many of the current issues around leadership and clarity of function. The following actions are recommended:

- Re-defining the Programme's high level principles and the development of indicators to enable assessment of Programme and RCC performance against them.
- Clarify and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the SPNAB, Welsh Government and RCCs.
- Identification and communication of good practice in service design and delivery that can be adapted for local context.
- Ensuring there is common understanding that a robust evidence base, informed by the Outcomes Framework, for the impacts and outcomes of Supporting People funding is required to secure future funding for the programme.

When appropriate the SPNAB needs to consider the appropriateness of radical proposals such as potential adjustments to the current funding arrangements for organisations that

are not compliant with the Programme.

The role and function of the Steering Board should be revisited to assess whether it can contribute to the delivery of the Programme or if task and finish groups (see 21) could report directly to the SPNAB.

The workstreams should be replaced by time bound task and finish groups with clear membership, remit and lines of accountability.

Welsh Government should explore the opportunities for increasing RCC influence through the use of alternative commissioning models such as Substance Misuse Area Planning Boards. This may incentivise engagement and collaboration of RCC members.

Linkages between the Supporting People Programme remit and other Welsh Government policy areas including health, social care and communities need strengthening at the national and regional levels:

- Welsh Government and RCCs should look at the linkages between

Supporting People and other Welsh Government funding streams including Families First, Communities First and Flying Start.

- RCCs should strengthen relationships with regional health and social care groups.

Communication of the Programme's strategic vision and decision making as well as expectations of RCC performance should be more explicit:

- Annual or six monthly meetings between the Minister, the SPNAB, key Welsh Government officials and RCC Chairs/ Vice Chairs will reinforce the strategic vision and leadership for the Programme.
- SPNAB and Steering Board meeting minutes, workplans and documentation need to be circulated in a timelier manner.
- Decision making and other salient Programme updates need to be consistently

communicated both at a national and regional level.

RCCs should be given more freedom to adapt processes and practice to local contexts. Requirements for RCC monitoring and reporting should be fit for purpose and reduced where deemed necessary.

Welsh Government officials should undertake a capacity building role to support RCCs to meet the strategic vision. Activities could include:

- Facilitating communication across RCCs to share commissioning and service user engagement good practice.
- Feeding back workstream activity.
- Developing existing networks e.g. RDC network.

Welsh Government should consider developing a generic role description outlining the knowledge, skills and competencies expected of an RCC Chair. The organisational role of the RCC Chair should be left to individual RCC discretion.

The RDC role should be clarified and standardised across the RCCs. Opportunities for increasing the focus of the role on partnership and relationship building with other strategic regional groups should be explored.

Service user engagement should be more meaningful and representative of the Programme's client groups and built into the Programme's Outcomes Framework. Welsh Government should share existing good practice and RCCs should look towards developing more service user-focused methods of performance measurement.

Author:

Miller Research Ltd

Katy Marrin

Heulwen Hudson

Nick Miller

Mair Smith

Shelter Cymru

Jennie Bibbings

30 September 2014

ISBN 978-1-4734-2204-9