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# SUPPORTING PEOPLE: OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES

PROGRESS SINCE AYLWARD

## Executive Summary

### 1. Research aims and objectives

- 1.1 The Supporting People Programme provides support to vulnerable individuals who are at risk of losing, or who have lost, their homes, or who need housing-related support to retain or regain their independence. It was established in 2003 and brought together a number of previous funding streams for housing-related support. The budget for the Supporting People Programme in Wales for 2015/16 was approximately £124 million.
- 1.2 This short term research project was undertaken to examine the situation with the older people's services provided by the Supporting People programme. More specifically, the project was tasked with ascertaining the extent of progress since the 2010 Aylward Review's recommendation that older people's services provided by Supporting People should be based on need and not age or tenure.
- 1.3 The objectives of the research were to:
  - Establish to what extent Supporting People older person services across Wales are currently being provided according to need, rather than tenure
  - Identify obstacles to progress encountered by local authorities, providers and RCCs
  - Identify areas across Wales where housing-related support services have moved from tenure-based to needs-based support, to identify difficulties and examples of good practice.

## **2. Methodology**

- 2.1 Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the project. Quantitative methods were used to establish the tenure of individuals receiving Supporting People older person services and how many units were being delivered across different tenures. Qualitative approaches were used to capture information about the experiences of different stakeholders, the benefits and challenges of moving to tenure-neutral service models and examples of good practice.
- 2.2 In order to meet the objectives, the following research tasks were undertaken:
- Analysis of the data from the survey conducted by the Quality Work stream (previous to this project) in January-February 2014 (60 responses out of 70-80 providers) and consideration of the findings
  - Collection and consideration of information from the RCCs and local authorities in relation to updates and changes since the 2014 survey was conducted.
  - A web-based survey of local authorities focusing on the current position of older person services and commissioning criteria (21 of 22 Local Authorities responded)
  - A short web-based survey for providers of Supporting People older person services in relation to current provision (65 responses were received from provider organisations, but these included some duplications)
  - Semi-structured interviews with local authority Supporting People leads and service providers in three areas.

## **3. Key findings**

### **Quality Work stream Survey 2014**

- 3.1 In relation to the accommodation in which services were provided, the large majority of services were provided to tenants of RSLs or local authorities. In terms of the capacity of services (i.e.: the number of properties), just over half of provision (52%) was to individuals in sheltered housing schemes and just under a third (31%) to individuals in social housing allocated to older persons.
- 3.2 The large majority of alarm provision (75 per cent) was via hardwired alarms.
- 3.3 The responses received to the Quality Work stream survey indicated that the language used when discussing the Aylward recommendation can differ, and as a result have different connotations. Various words and phrases were used to describe services that were connected to need, rather than tenure. While some respondents used the phrase ‘tenure-neutral’ in relation to the recommendation, others referred to ‘need specific’, ‘needs based’, and ‘needs-led’ services. These phrases, or references to needs assessments, were often used to indicate understanding of or compliance with the Aylward recommendation, but many of the services described appeared to be provided to tenants only.

## **Challenges**

- 3.4 Both the narrative data from the 2014 survey and the update information from RCCs revealed a number of challenges and obstacles in relation to implementing the Aylward recommendation:
- Legal issues included agreements relating to service levels made with tenants when housing stock was transferred from local authority control to new agencies.
  - Business issues included a lack of any internal impetus for change (no difficulty in renting properties), a lack of ‘political buy-in’ for implementation of the recommendation, investment in buildings prior to the policy change, and, what was felt to be a restrictive focus by Supporting People on needs which might not relate well to older people.
  - Practical problems with the delivery of new models included the higher cost of delivering support in the community, when compared with provision in sheltered schemes and the difficulty of providing consistency in services when local authorities were implementing the recommendation at different speeds. Particular problems with ‘hub and spoke’ models or the use of existing support staff were raised. These included a lack of ‘spare capacity’ within sheltered schemes (and a consequent need for community support to remain geographically close to these schemes to prevent a detrimental impact on existing residents), the lack of sheltered schemes in many areas, and support staff with second jobs.

## **Local Authority and Provider Surveys 2015**

- 3.5 Responses to the 2015 Local Authority survey indicated that across Wales, the large majority of units of support (74 per cent) were commissioned by local authorities as ‘fixed’ support (accommodation-based), with the remainder commissioned as ‘floating’ support (non-accommodation-based).
- 3.6 Local Authorities were asked to indicate whether they expected providers to provide services only to their own tenants, or to tenants and other individuals. Overall, across **both fixed and floating** units of support, local authorities indicated that of the units they commissioned, nearly half (43 per cent) were available only to tenants of RSLs and 38 per cent were available only to local authority tenants. In total, 19 per cent of support was identified as being available to anyone, regardless of tenure.
- 3.7 Local Authorities were asked to state how they were working with providers to implement the Aylward recommendation. The most common example given for a way that local authorities had implemented the SP guidelines was by remodelling services to be based on need. Of services which had been remodelled, or where remodelling was in progress or planned, the models that were generally used or anticipated were floating support (seven models in progress or planned) or hub and spoke / community warden models (four models in progress or planned).

## **Changes to Services**

- 3.8 The interviews undertaken with both Local Authorities and Providers from three Local Authority areas found that the ways in which the services changed varied, some moved to a ‘hub and spoke’ model, whereby a warden is based at a scheme but can also provide support out in the community. Others have chosen to break the link between specific

schemes and warden so that staff provide support across a number of different areas, without being linked to one particular scheme. Despite the variation in how services changed, all interviewees reported the changes were underpinned by the provision of support based on need, as identified via needs-assessments.

### **Impact on Service Users and Staff**

- 3.9 All interviewees were aware of the considerable impact that changes to older people's services would have on both the staff and service users. As such change was typically managed in a stage by stage approach ensuring that both staff and service users were engaged in the changes and had ample opportunity to voice their views. Most interviewees reported that despite initial concerns, service users have adapted well to the changes.
- 3.10 All three provider organisation interviewees spoke in detail about staffing issues in their remodelled services and the impact of the changes on staff. In all three cases it was clear that the role of support staff in the remodelled services was very different from the former 'warden' or 'good neighbour' role, which staff had often held for many years, and all reported some level of initial reluctance from staff to take on the new roles. All interviewees discussed the high levels of staff training that were required for them to be able to fulfil the new role, although there was general agreement that the staff development had been a positive step (both on an organisational and individual basis).
- 3.11 Interviewees from provider organisations generally felt that the remodelled services and the new roles had brought benefits for staff members, including the development of new skills, a more professional role, and the development of team working. This last was found to be of particular importance, as it had reduced the isolation of individual staff members, enabled peer support and brought benefits to service users.
- 3.12 Five out of six interviews interviewees stated that services delivered in the community were more resource-intensive than those delivered in sheltered housing schemes (sometimes substantially so). It was clear that services provided 'in the community' were not able to reach the same number of people as support delivered in sheltered services, or would need substantially more resources to be able to do so. This was frequently attributed to travel time between appointments. While this was particularly important in rural areas, it was also an issue both in urban areas and where community services were delivered in the locality of the sheltered scheme.
- 3.13 Where hub and spoke schemes were in operation, there was general agreement among interviewees that capacity had been freed up to provide work in the wider community by removing services from those who were found not to need support within the sheltered schemes once a needs assessment had been conducted.
- 3.14 Many interviewees alluded to a potential overlap between housing related support and befriending or 'good neighbour' roles. All interviewees who raised this concern were clear that befriending is not the role of Supporting People services, but many also noted that there is a need for this type of service where older people services are concerned.

## **4. Conclusions/Recommendations**

### **The Aylward recommendation**

- 4.1 There is a high level of awareness of the Aylward recommendation among both local authorities and providers. However, there is still frequent ambiguity as to what is intended by the recommendation and the requirements on both local authorities and providers if it is to be met. In some cases it appears that 'needs-based' services are felt automatically to meet the terms of the recommendation, even where they are available only to tenants. Some organisations continue to operate eligibility criteria with a sole focus on age for many services, including sheltered housing services.
- 4.2 Welsh Government documents such as the SPPG Guidance and terms and conditions letters sent to local authorities) have tended to repeat the wording of the Aylward recommendation without further clarification. The confusion over what the recommendation means in practice, as uncovered by this project, makes it clear that clarity is required in this area.

### **Commissioning / provision patterns**

- 4.3 It is clear that the substantial bulk of SPPG funded dedicated older person services are still being commissioned by local authorities in such a way that they remain available only to tenants of local authorities and RSL providers. The reason for this appears to be the heritage of historical service models rather than evidence of particular levels of need in these tenures. While these patterns are changing, this is taking place on a slow and gradual basis. Change is taking place at a different pace in different areas and some local authorities (and possibly some RCCs) lack a timescale for developments and full implementation.
- 4.4 While there are clearly some areas which have made very significant changes to their provision, and appear to be working well within the terms of the Aylward recommendation, there are also cases where an organisational, local or regional belief that the recommendation has been fully implemented may be misplaced, and the level of support provided in the community in question remain lower than might be expected.

### **Resourcing issues**

- 4.5 There is little doubt that targeted housing-related support delivered in areas of dense populations of older people, such as sheltered housing schemes provides services at relatively low cost. As such, it may be considered that some services delivered in these contexts are a valuable element of SP services for older people. Greater resources are required to provide services in the community, particularly in rural areas where there are more likely to be large distances between individuals receiving services. Currently, these challenges are largely being overcome on a case-by-case basis by the organisations involved in this research, but questions remain as to how support can be delivered in rural and remote areas. Various models are being contemplated, but experience in this field is often at a formative stage.

### **The need for low level ‘befriending’ services**

- 4.6 The interviews undertaken as part of this research project suggested that many older people (including some currently receiving SPPG funded support) may not have housing-related needs as identified under the Supporting People guidance, but may benefit from befriending or ‘good neighbour’ services. In some cases the preventative aspect to such services was highlighted.

### **Models of service provision**

- 4.7 Data collected as part of this research, suggested that the most common model being deployed by RSLs in developments in the light of the Aylward recommendation were hub and spoke models. This was not universal, as was demonstrated in one of the interview areas, where a hub and spoke model was explicitly rejected as being an effective way forward. ‘Floating’ services were also referred to as models for provision in line with the Aylward recommendation. In many cases these were being provided by organisations without housing stock, but this term was also used to describe services provided to tenants only, on a flexible basis.
- 4.8 The information from the 2015 survey and the interviews indicated that where services were provided by RSLs and local authorities both to their own tenants and to other individuals, the substantial bulk of support was being provided to tenants, particularly in hub and spoke models. There were various reasons for this, including the fact that support remained available to large numbers of tenants of sheltered housing schemes following needs assessments, the fact that tenants might be automatically ‘transferred’ to a replacement service (at least initially, until different support could be sourced if appropriate) and the fact that tenants were more likely to be aware of, and referred to, services provided by their landlord organisation. While this situation is likely to change over time, as remodelled services become more embedded and flexible, it was clear from at least two of the semi-structured interviews that developing a greater presence in community settings was not immediately possible.

### **Challenges and obstacles to successful implementation**

- 4.9 Agencies, and particularly provider organisations, face numerous challenges and obstacles in remodelling services to be in line with the Aylward recommendation. While many of these are relatively minor and have been successfully overcome by a number of organisations, some are significant and the interviews suggest that on occasion the impact of others was sometimes initially under-estimated.
- 4.10 There is no doubt that it is provider organisations which face the most numerous challenges in adapting services to meet the Aylward recommendations. Provider organisations have a duty not only to service users – who may well be vulnerable and highly concerned by or confused about change (particularly where they have chosen a service on the understanding that support would be available to them ‘for life’) – but also to staff. Many therefore face moral and / or contractual obligations [while potentially also experiencing a real or potential loss of funding if changes are not made]. However, while there will be differences in different local authority areas, it is clear that there are pockets of information, including potential solutions to many of the challenges raised, already

available from the work undertaken by different local authorities and provider organisations.

#### **Service users**

- 4.11 It was clear from the research that service users are frequently deeply concerned about and often resistant to changes in services. The interviews indicated that a sensitive consultation process takes time and is put at risk if rushed and this point was echoed both in the qualitative data obtained from the 2014 survey and the update information. Interviews and update information also indicated methods that had been successfully deployed by providing organisations throughout the consultation process, and measures which had been implemented to reduce the impact of changes on a temporary or permanent basis.

#### **Alarms**

- 4.12 Alarms are an area of particular difficulty, partly because of the substantial cost implications attached to changes in alarm provision and partly because of much wider questions raised during this research relating to their relevance to Supporting People purposes and outcomes. Of all the services under consideration, discussion of alarm provision contained the highest levels of conflicting information (in terms of how they are currently used, how they might be used and their overall value) and identified some of the most difficult challenges for both commissioners and providers. However, there is clear guidance from the National Housing Federation as to how the costs of alarm systems should be funded. As costs related to door entry or security are eligible for Housing Benefit, they should not be funded by Supporting People, as this risks double funding.

#### **Supporting People outcomes and older people**

- 4.13 While not strictly under the remit of this project, it was noted during this research that there is some concern that the outcomes expected from Supporting People are not always appropriate when working with older people. Services funded by Supporting People are intended to identify specific needs and provide support within a finite timescale with the aim of developing the capacity of the individual, or maintaining independence. The current outcomes framework focuses on increasing capacity and does not fully reflect the maintain independence element. It is understood the Outcome Framework is being developed further and changes may take this into account.

#### **Recommendations**

- 4.14 RECOMMENDATION: Local Authorities and providers should continue to work towards older people's services which are tenure neutral, and not based on age or location. Work towards this goal should be monitored. Future statements and should be explicit as to what is a 'tenure neutral' service..
- 4.15 RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that RCCs and Local Authorities work with stakeholders to develop timetables for implementation of tenure-neutral services. Information on timings and the plans for implementation should be submitted as part of the Regional Commissioning Plan / Regional Strategic Plan .
- 4.16 RECOMMENDATION: It is advised that progress in this area is monitored on a consistent basis. It is suggested that the RCC Annual Reports contains specific section updating Welsh

Government on developments regarding older people's services.

- 4.17 RECOMMENDATION: Given the extent of rural areas within Wales, it would be advisable for local authorities and providers to consider the value of a working group to identify models which work well in rural and semi-rural areas.
- 4.18 RECOMMENDATION: While local authorities (in combination with other agencies) are primarily responsible for ensuring that there are adequate and appropriate services in place to support older people in their region, this may reveal a funding 'gap' in an area where expectations are likely to grow. As befriending services does not fall within the remit of Supporting People funding, Providers should explore other avenues, such as working with the voluntary sector for example, to fill this gap.
- 4.19 RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that, given the reliance on hub and spoke and floating services in implementing the Aylward recommendation, Local Authorities ensure that some form of evaluation of these models is undertaken as part of their service reviews. .
- 4.20 RECOMMENDATION: Regional Collaborative Committees, Local Authorities and Providers need to ensure engagement with service users starts at a very early stage when they are remodelling services. This research has made clear the concern that changes to older people's services can cause and so should be at the heart of any changes to services. All necessary steps should be taken to ensure that discussions with service users are accessible and understandable, including to vulnerable individuals such as those with mental health, learning disabilities or conditions such as dementia or memory loss.
- 4.21 RECOMMENDATION: As the door entry and security system elements of alarm services are eligible for Housing Benefit, Supporting People should not also be funding these elements. Supporting People should fund the emergency alarm elements only (and this should be received by only those who have an identified need for the service).
- 4.22 RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that Welsh Government evaluates what changes could be made to the Supporting People outcomes framework which would be appropriate for older people.

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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