

Notes of the Voluntary Sector Forum 8th February 2017

The chair welcomed all present and asked only those who were new to the forum to introduce themselves as it would take too long to get round everyone. The forum was attended by 59 representatives of voluntary sector organisations, although the invitation extended to beyond 400.

The chair introduced colleagues May VanderSchalkwyk from Public Health Wandsworth&Richmond Councils, Matt Maher and Mellissa Watson from the Community Partnerships Team of Wandsworth&Richmond Councils, Richard Wiles Preventative Services Commissioner of Wandsworth&Richmond Councils and Amrinder Seghal of Wandsworth Clinical Commissioning Group. These colleagues are all working together within a reference group known as the 'Promoting Good Health Reference Group', alongside Lauren Ashley-Boyall of the Voluntary Sector Co-ordination Project. This group focuses on how to develop an ongoing dialogue between the voluntary sector and our commissioning bodies to learn how to work more collaboratively. Lauren works not only to bring voluntary organisations together in this forum, but also to develop these partnerships. Lauren is supported by an advisory group made up of 16 representatives of other voluntary and community groups. The advisory group is aware that it is not ethnically diverse enough to represent our voluntary sector and would welcome representation from a wider range of groups. Please do get in touch with Lauren if you are interested in supporting the project and joining the advisory group.

Presentations from Voluntary Sector Organisations

The forum heard 4 short presentations from voluntary sector organisations –

Sue Rolfe Putney Wellbeing Friends - Befriending/signposting for common mental health problems can be found in Putney Library from 6-8pm every Wednesday. They are recruiting volunteers who will be trained in Mental Health First Aid. Although they have not had much of a relationship with Talking Therapies to date, Sarah Grantham and her team (from South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust) is coming to speak to them tonight. WCEN's co-production models are key.

Manuel Button Wandsworth Community Transport – minibuses for community groups. Train members of the community as drivers to keep the rental costs down. Also provide a shopping service supported by volunteers in each area of the borough on different days of the week, regular outings for both the over and under 65's and 2 newsletters per year. Although they have plenty of volunteer helpers, they struggle to recruit volunteer drivers – so new volunteers are very welcome!

Annie McDowall Share Community – help people with disabilities to achieve their dreams. Offer training in IT, Catering, English and Maths, Horticultural Skills and utilise latest technology, including an immersive learning suite which is available for hire to funded groups and for free to non-funded groups. Also offer a 'go anywhere do anything' programme delivered by a team of volunteer social buddies. They are keen on forming partnerships, and are currently working with Action on Hearing Loss and Oak Lodge School. Use the Outcomes Star to measure both students achievement and organisational impacts. Although do not offer specific older people services, do not exclude older people, with no maximum age limit for participation. If there is something you think Share should particularly offer please let them know. See Share in action here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdBkk9AoGas>

Lilias Gilies Wandsworth Older People's Forum – open meeting on the second Tuesday of each month in the Anchor Centre, 273 Garratt Lane SW18, from 2pm. Has been running for 25 years, originally with support from the local Council to act as a voice for older people. Membership now supports the forum with an annual subscription, with over 100 older peoples organisations forming part of this network, and a newsletter. They are very concerned about loneliness and isolation and would like to do more outreach but need funding to extend their programme.

The Prevention Framework – MayVanschalkwyk and Richard Wiles

The Prevention Framework was presented by Dr May VanderSchalkwyk from Public Health Wandsworth&Richmond Councils. Dr Richard Wiles Preventative Services Commissioner of Wandsworth&Richmond Councils referenced a recent council paper (Paper 16-418), which described a new different style of commissioning, which will involve a joint CCG and local authority programme of voluntary organisation funding in 2017/18, which will work with voluntary organisations to define its ambitions and outcomes. Dr Wiles described the vision for fewer but more substantial contracts, with a focus on mutually agreed priorities defined by outcomes not minutiae. These outcomes will be delivered often by groups of organisations working together. He recognised that this will be a long-term commitment and a gradual change. There is no additional funding, therefore a pragmatic approach is needed. The next step is work with voluntary organisations to define the ambitions and outcomes. There then followed an open discussion with questions and answers.

The themes of questions and concerns related mostly to:

- Sufficient timescales to enable voluntary sector organisations to participate in the prevention framework and joint commissioning programme both in agreeing shared outcomes, preparing for contracts and delivering activities. Voluntary organisations have a variety of funding sources, with staff contracts, partnership agreements, planning and service delivery timescales taking time to co-ordinate and activate.
- Clarity is needed on what will happen next, how voluntary organisations can participate and get information and communications to enable contribution.
- Resources are needed for both evaluation work when focusing on outcomes, and managing partnerships and consortiums. This needs to be considered when agreeing contracts.
- How service users and communities will be involved in the process and setting priorities is also important.

Question: The Alton West activity centre closed down over the year ago– this used to provide an afterschool service to local children. We are very concerned about this.

Answer: This particular service is not part of my budget area, which is adult services so I am not familiar with the example. However, I will take your feedback back to the relevant children's services commissioner.

Question: We welcome your positive message. You talked about basing work on outcomes. How will you look at outcomes and recognise that there is a cost to working out what has happened? Evaluation will be an extra piece of work and will need funding. Another issue might be factors that stop you from being able to do what want due to accountabilities and how they are balanced between partners

Answer: We recognise that outcome measurement is tricky and that there will be a cost to measure and research impact. We want to focus less on the little things and focus more on the bigger changes and impacts.

Question: How will service users be able to be involved in the process of collaboration and determining what the priorities are? They are the ones who know the reality of how services work and meet their needs.

Answer: We are more likely to work with organisations on commissioning and with users when looking at impact.

Answer: A focus on needs will be important, e.g. as part of JSNA, to help prioritise and make sure needs are met. It will be important to be open and have contributions. It is important to remember this is only the beginning of the process, and we want to work with you to ensure we are inclusive.

Question: We have a question about the timing of commissioning. As a voluntary sector organisation, we run and maintain a number of services with different funding streams from different sources. We need to be able to project 12 months ahead. Will we be able to maintain our services? What should we be responding to because we need to

be fixing contracts and service agreements and this is difficult because we don't have a timeframe but would like to be preparing for this.

Answer: There are various funding streams with different timelines and contract end dates, these won't change. We have had the authority to extend the existing contracts listed in paper . Some contracts run until 2019 so will continue on the current contracting basis until then. We can answer questions about individual contracts individually.

Question: We would like a lot more clarity and transparency around commissioning and service design, as well as how to apply

Answer: We have seen how the voluntary sector can work well together in this way in Richmond in delivering Council-commissioned services. Smaller organisations can struggle with the sort of admin demands from in a Council contract. If they are part of a consortium it can help, though we understand the point about a need for clarity and transparency.

Comment: I have had experience of being a lead provider in a consortium and it is a lot of work. Commissioners need to think about how they resource this. The same is true for personal budgets – we now have several individuals or companies that we are now having to deal with the administration for.

Comment: In Wandsworth it is good to see people assemble with a voice for the voluntary sector where there have been lots of smaller groups for many years. We have a long way to go to have the combined voice as happens in Richmond, as they have had a CVS for years.

Question: In relation to consortiums we do need long lead times because need to establish contracts with subcontractors – this includes writing the contracts, amendments to articles and memorandums of understanding, service agreements and more with all or the subcontractors. Data sharing can be a real issue as well. Large chance is not something that can happen in a 12 month period.

Answer: It isn't something that can happen overnight but it is achievable.

Comment: The problem is it takes time and money away from the actual activities and services that we are providing

Question: Would it be useful at future meetings to have Richmond colleagues to talk about how they have managed to achieve partnership working and consortiums?

Answer from Richmond CVS: I will take back the question– it can be done in a reasonable time frame though it isn't straightforward.

Comment: Raising the question about cascading information and communications about events like this – people in voluntary organisations need to know why they are coming and the benefits. Each of us can let our group know about this meeting so that leads for groups can come along. There is a consultation ending this Monday on data. We need access to shared local data. As voluntary organisations we also need to cascade information within our communities. All 50 of us here should respond to the consultation.

Question: How will we know what the next phase will be – should we wait until the next meeting for updates?

Comment from Amrinder: Contracting and commissioning clearly needs to change. We are placing an emphasis on trying to move away from a traditional model – a more collaborative way – whether it's lead provider model or other ways. The point is the CCG and local authority want to work together with the community and voluntary sector to find the right solutions for what works locally. We are also looking at models beyond Richmond and all over the country to see how they work. We are open to new ideas.

Question: How is the process of engagement with the voluntary sector going to work – when and what? How can we prepare for this?

There is an open invitation for focussed meeting with Richard Wiles to jointly discuss and plan what this engagement and consultation will look like. This will take place on Tuesday 21st February, at the Katherine Low Settlement between 3pm and 5pm. Lauren Ashley-Boyll will circulate details.

Comment: This conversation has had a professional tone and encourages hope for how things will positively move forward.

Question: What is going the scope of the new approach – is it limited just to specific voluntary sector funding programmes or will it cover all procurement from the private sector too?

Answer: The scope will be limited and there will be areas where the Council continues to procure services on a commercial basis. It will be a challenge for the voluntary sector to show where it is able to make a unique contribution in achieving service objectives.

The Community Partnerships Team – Matt Maher

Matt explained how local authorities are funded by a government grant, which was cut by 40% hence Wandsworth and Richmond Council's adopting a shared staffing arrangement (SSA). This means a single workforce operating across both boroughs, whilst retaining separate political administration and recognising differing population needs. Joint commissioning across both boroughs will only be considered where it is appropriate. The steer of the partnerships team comes directly from the locally elected members.

Matt welcomed ideas and asks from the voluntary sector in order to develop a way forward together, and committed to communicating and championing the views of the sector to the elected representatives. He also stated his team would endeavour to ensure that commissioning information is shared, an ongoing dialogue is formed and improvements are made quickly. He offered the support of his team as a facilitator and enabler to colleagues in the council.

Q: That was a very good presentation, very clear. How will you promote the voluntary sector?

A: A broad range of methods. We will highlight the value and ensure recognition and appreciation. We can share information about the voluntary sector online, through our social media and publications.

Q: We run our events on a Sunday. Would your team be willing to visit us on evenings or weekends?

A: Yes we work flexibly. We even have a Gujarati speaker who can come to the Wandsworth Older Peoples Forum.

Q: For us to be sustainable we need funding, but struggle with recurrent funding and often have to think of new projects. Can you help us?

A: Yes, come to us and tell us your ideas for projects and we will see how we might be able to help. We also have a role in linking you to other funding streams.

Q: You need to go out and talk to people, you can't expect people to come to you all the time.

A: We will also go out and talk to people, like coming to forums like today.

Q: How are you going to include people with learning disabilities, especially those who do not have a carer?

A: Accessible information and including everyone is extremely important.

Future Topics and Feedback

The meeting had already overran by 15 minutes, therefore there was no time for feedback, however there had been suggestions for future topics within today's conversations. These will be considered by the voluntary sector co-ordination project advisory group in setting the agenda for the coming meeting in May.

Lauren Ashley-Boydall apologised for the difficulties with the sound equipment resulting in not everyone hearing properly, and also to Annie of Share Community for the technical difficulties resulting in not being able to show her presentation or video.

The meeting closed at 12.45pm