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Event report 06/07/16

Managing Demand &  
Increased Expectations



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# Managing Demand and Increased Expectation – Event Report

## Introduction

On 5th July 2016 Social Work Scotland in partnership with COSLA facilitated a workshop which aimed to provide key leaders across social work with time and space for deeper thinking on a number of dilemma's faced by local partnerships. Specifically we chose to focus on how best to respond to:

*“The need to manage demand and increased expectations whilst working with increasingly limited resources”.*

The public service reform agenda and legislation such as Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 the new Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 require a different way forward which is more personalised, flexible and one which acknowledges the strengths and assets within people and their communities.

The workshop was developed in response to key messages from a range of stakeholders which continue to suggest that current eligibility frameworks and thresholds conflict with a public service reform agenda which demands greater emphasis on early intervention, prevention and assessing for outcomes.

The question of eligibility remains a complex issue which will require further consideration at all levels, but we can't talk about eligibility in isolation. It is important to recognise the interconnectedness with the preventative agenda, how we need to better understand and articulate those links and how it fits together within the wider health and social care system.

The workshop therefore provided an opportunity to begin a conversation around a number of these current dilemmas.

Delegates were provided with the opportunity hear from 2 keynote speakers, to share best practice, explore key learning around some of the innovative responses to these dilemmas already being implemented across the country and consider what is needed to support partnerships going forward.

### Attendance:

The workshop was attended by 28 delegates with representation from Chief Social Work Officers, Senior Managers, Self-directed Support Leads, Commissioners, Elected Members and Scottish Government Policy Officers.

### Intended Outcomes:

- Delegates will have opportunity to collectively explore the challenges of managing increased demand.
- Delegates will have the opportunity to collectively explore and share potential solutions.
- Delegates will help identify what further support is needed going forward.
- Intelligence will be captured that can help inform both local and national government.

## Keynote Presentations

Delegates had the opportunity to hear keynote presentations from Colin Slasberg and Professor John Bolton both independent consultants with a wealth of experience in the delivery of social care. Their inputs helped stimulate debate, challenged our thinking and helpfully informed the afternoon discussions.

**Colin Slasberg** is an independent consultant, previously assistant director at Thurrock Council with many years' experience in social care, he has a number of published articles about Self-directed Support, the tensions between eligibility, resource allocation systems and developing a social care system which is based on outcomes.

In his presentation he offered a perspective on how current eligibility policies are impacting negatively on the desire to work in a preventative and strengths based way. Colin proposes a new model which is being tested in one local authority in England. The model requires a reframing of eligibility, the setting of a minimum guarantee which the council has a duty to meet and recognises unmet need which is often lost to the system. The model supports a move to assessments that focus on strengths and assets within people and communities. He argues a fundamental change to how we manage eligibility is required to support the change we wish to see.

## Key Points for reflection

- Is a fundamental rethink of eligibility policy required to help shift resources towards early intervention/prevention?
- A large proportion of social care spend is at the tertiary level – how can we best focus energy on this area.
- Political and managerial will and significant commitment to systemic change would be required.
- Faced with criticism re inadequate resources government can hold councils responsible for being overly restrictive in applying eligibility criteria.
- Current processes designed to deliver assessments to determine eligibility and resource allocation.
- Having to play the role of gatekeeper of resources impacts on frontline workers' ability to work from an asset/strengths based stance.

## Colin Slasberg presentation

**Professor John Bolton** previously director of social services in Coventry has over 40 years' experience working in social care as well as with the Audit Commission. John has published a number of papers including his recent paper on predicting and managing demand in social care.

Professor Bolton's presentation considered how might adult care manage and predict future demand in a better way? He emphasises a stronger focus on recovery, rehabilitation and reablement approaches to early interventions, suggests it's not about eligibility but about getting the right help at the right time.

## Key Points for reflection

- There is a growing evidence base for preventative responses which suggests that all interventions with people need to focus on promoting independence – not sustaining people or creating unnecessary dependency.
- The NHS directly impacts on unnecessary demand for social care, often through risk averse assessment in hospital settings leading to recommendations for care and lack of awareness of alternative responses.
- There are two different “front doors” for accessing social care support, community front door and from acute services. We need to examine how people are assessed at these points of entry. Can demand can be managed better at both front doors by changing practices?
- We should never assess for long term support when people are in crisis as this risks creating unnecessary dependency.
- We need to better understand how all out interventions impact on people – what delivers the best outcomes.
- How do we support staff move from the role of rescuer/fixer to enabler using an asset based approach
- How do we get better at commissioning for outcomes?

## Professor Bolton presentation

### Afternoon Session – Facilitated conversations.

The afternoon session encouraged some sharing of best practice in smaller round table discussions. The groups were invited to consider how local areas are currently responding to the dilemmas raised in the mornings session and consider what further support is needed to help respond better in the future.

### What are we already doing well?

There was acknowledgement that Scotland is in a strong position to respond to the challenges and there is political ambition to shift the balance of care which is reflected in many of our key policies.

It was reassuring that discussions were able to identify significant innovation which was already taking place across the country in response to how we manage demand and expectation. Many of which are looking at how to shift to more preventative early intervention models of care and support. Whilst new integration arrangements presented challenges there was a degree of optimism from delegates for potential opportunities to do things differently.

A sample of positive examples of doing things differently includes successful **public social partnership** arrangements, Falkirk’s **work to engage with local community trusts**, working in partnership with social work to offer a community responses to needs. City of Edinburgh have used some of the transformation funding for Self-directed Support to create **drop in service for families and disabled children to come together**, share experiences and help inform what good personalised supports should be. West Lothian’s **frail elderly programme**, helping to explore alternative supports for many people who have long term conditions. It was felt that there is real learning to be had around **recovery models in drug**

**and alcohol services**, Scottish Borders having developed support services linked to performance indicators and wellbeing tools.

### What do we need to get better at?

- We need to become stronger and more confident in our profession and be better able to articulate the unique contribution we bring to integrated arrangements.
- We need to better understand the positive impact of interventions on people lives and gather an evidence base to support decisions on what is required.
- We need to be better able to influence hospital discharge and help health colleagues better understand alternative ways to support people in their communities.
- We need to build and find allies across all sectors who are committed to collectively finding creative solutions.
- We need to create a more dynamic social care system.
- We need to get better at anticipatory care planning.
- We need to focus on assessments which are strengths based and focused on outcomes for people.

### What is needed to support us to respond to the dilemmas raised?

- Greater political leadership to drive the culture shift required.
- Strong leadership within social work
- A better understanding of the positive impact of interventions on people lives.
- Development of a strong evidence base to support decisions on what is required.
- Budget transparency across health and social care – which is equitable and able to influence expenditure.
- More flexible and innovative commissioning responses and better understanding of outcomes based commissioning.
- Greater investment in building community capacity and resilience
- Changes to audit responsibilities and monitoring pressures – to allow focus of energy in the right areas.
- To develop a shared narrative and a common language that is accessible and understood by all.

### Emerging themes

#### **Good assessment at the right time remains key**

Both speakers highlighted the need to develop a workforce that can work from a strengths based approach with assessments undertaken that builds on assets and strengths in people, families and communities. This was reinforced in discussions with recognition that investment in the workforce is required to support a change in practice. By having the right conversations at the right time, we will be better able to help people get the right help at the right time and minimise the risk of unnecessary dependency. It is important that both health and social work colleagues understand and share this same agenda.

## **Whole systems approach needed**

Supporting strengths based assessment and support planning which works from an asset based approach will not be enough if the system does not change to support practice.

There needs to be better connections, we need to make systems visible and easy to navigate. It's also not only about adult care, similar challenges also exist in children's services.

We need to work together to develop appropriate responses, in both preventative approaches and in how we respond to people with more critical levels of need with the focus being on how the system supports people to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible and gets the right level of care and support at the right time.

## **Exploring eligibility**

There was understandably a degree of caution and anxiety about opening up the debate about eligibility, current frameworks and if we need to rethink the eligibility question. There was recognition that good eligibility criteria should be robust and determined by assets, risks, transparently fairness and affordability.

Does the eligibility conversation become a different one if we get the preventative/early intervention approaches right? Is it possible to achieve the kind of transformational change we wish to see with the current eligibility framework? Some delegates did feel current eligibility practice remained a source of tension that needed further examination.

The new Carers Act will bring further opportunities and challenges around eligibility.

## **What did delegates value most from the session?**

- Protected time for reflection
- Inputs from elsewhere and hearing the speakers thinking/research
- Peer support and shared learning about local practice and responses

## **Last thoughts and next steps**

The workshop was a welcomed opportunity and feedback on the value of the session was good.

Delegates highlighted the vital role that Social Work Scotland can play in bringing people together with an acknowledgement that opportunities for discussion of a common agenda can be rare.

"We must continue to do this sort of thing – the protected space and dialogue was invaluable" (delegate)

**Ask of Social Work Scotland/COSLA:**

- Can Social Work Scotland support further sessions like these to bring people together to collectively seek and share solutions?
- Is there capacity to provide similar facilitated sessions in local partnerships?
- Could there be a work done to revisit practice governance as a framework to how we deliver some of this in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser?

Social Work Scotland and COSLA appreciate the time and contributions given by both speakers and delegates. The dilemmas explored in the session remain complex, with no easy answers and require further attention. Attendance and contributions at the workshop is further evidence of the importance of bringing key people together and demonstrates an appetite to collectively seek solutions.

The workshop provided space for deeper thinking for key leaders to understand the issues and begin to inform thinking at both local and national level as to how best to develop services which can respond.

The discussions and learning from the session will help to inform future work by Social Work Scotland including a paper on eligibility and Self-directed Support.