

Commissioning Network notes, 16th March 2017

1) Commissioning Reps Update

- Jo Ivens fed back on a meeting which had taken place with Rob Persey, new Director of Adult Social Care and Health at BHCC, and John Child, Chief Operating Officer at CCG
- Participants discussed the emerging Joint Commissioning Unit, priorities from their perspectives and touched on recent/forthcoming commissioning issues/challenges/opportunities

Summary feedback from small group work

Integrated Commissioning Unit comments

- What elements of health and social care will sit within it? Is housing included (don't separate housing and health)? How will silos be broken down? Can we better understand the inter-connectedness of all services to maximise impact and minimise any damage during de-commissioning? Services needs to be viewed from users' perspective and better joined up (shared strategic delivery as well as shared strategic commissioning)
- How will we learn from what's gone before? How can we maintain dialogue through the whole process? Stakeholders need to be involved before commission is designed and there needs to be greater recognition and value attached to the VCS involvement, as the orgs often hold significant commissioning expertise that is going untapped
- How will decisions around development of the ICU be made? VCS needs to be represented from outset to shape ICU and be involved in prioritising funding decisions. Not being properly engaged can often be a disempowering experience for the VCS. Meaningful opportunities are essential
- Commissioning needs to allow for more experimentation and opportunities to reflect and learn
- The timing/scheduling of commissioning and comms around this has been problematic, eg changes were made to the youth services commission and Third Sector Investment Programme mid process, which is disrespectful to organisations and leads to poor HR practices within the VCS and disruption to service. Comms to applicants needs to improve and when commissioners don't know anything, even just saying this and that they'll be in touch when more is known, is positive in itself
- Long-term commissioning is preferable
- What funds will the ICU hold? How can resources be committed to commissioning in context of cuts?

- What is the timeframe for the ICU becoming operational?
- How will measuring impact and evidencing impact move forward within the ICU?
We need to adopt a stronger approach here. VCS has expertise it can offer on outcomes and measuring impact
- Commissioning needs to be driven by prevention agenda
- The prospectus approach is positive and should be use in any VCS commissioning
- Balancing collaboration with competition within the VCS and between the VCS and others needs debating and understanding – a competitive process is not always helpful and here are limitations to partnership models which need to be better captured and discussed
- One commissioner needs to take a clear strategic lead for any services commissioned across an area. This will help with joining services up and in developing relationships – the organisational cultural complexities cannot be underestimated and we need to keep plugging away at building shared understanding and values, around the critical person-centred approach
- There needs to be a consistency in method and approach to avoid reactivity and to ensure everything is properly included.

Commissioning challenges/opportunities/things coming up or recently happened

- Advocacy services commission needs assessment process is starting March/April
- The supported accommodation commission (including floating support, supported housing, family mediation, young people services and single homeless, housing advice) has been challenging. It is meant to be a 3 stage accommodation pathway however the development process is very slow and comms has been poor so providers/users are not aware where the process is up to
- Review of Information and Advice service is underway
- CCG commissioning generally – the temporary extension to some contracts needs resolving ahead of Sept 17. Services are negatively impacted on by uncertainty
- Thresholds for eligibility and gaps in services remain a problem around adult social care
- The I am Whole campaign was a good example of well communicated/commissioned activity which brought together multiple stakeholders and had high impact on young people

2) Accessible Information Standard

Jane Lodge, CCG and Judith Cooper, BHCC presented on the Accessible Information Standards. This covered:

- How the Standards empower service users
- What organisations are required to do
- Information and support for organisations
- Issues and concerns arising around ensuring compliance



Q. Is there funding available to support the translation of information into braille format?

There is not specific funding available to implement the standard. It is not anticipated that ALL information be produced wholesale in Braille format but that communications are tailored to fit the needs of individuals. In which case it is anticipated that the costs of translating one-off letters etc will remain relatively low. However, CCG will need to track and flag to funders if there is a significant implementation cost. CCG has contracts with BSL providers which could be used to monitor demand on the VC sector.

Q. What should we do if one of our service beneficiaries reports that their GP (or other service provider) is not meeting the AIS?

Refer these incidences to Jane Lodge at CCG for follow-up.

Q. Does guidance exist to train up/support staff to identify what information needs people may have?

The first 'go to' resources would be Online training: Health Education for England:
<http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/accessible-information-standard/>

OR local training:

BH Speakout: "Accessible Information" <https://learning.brighton-hove.gov.uk/courses/bookings/> - although targeted around learning disabilities it also has broader application.

Q. Do you have to produce accessible information in a like-for-like format for everyone or can a telephone call replace a letter for example?

It's about meeting the needs of the individual. So yes. A telephone call might replace a letter if the person agrees that this is the best way for them to receive information.

3) Here's Start-Up Fund

Matthew Riley from Here presented information on their new start up fund, for information.

Here's Start-Up Fund is funding innovative ideas from our members and the people who work with them. We have up to £50k a year to invest on a long-term interest free loan basis, for any member of our organisation to deliver our purpose, Care Unbound, for a specific idea or project. The idea or project can come from anyone – our members, people who are connected with our members, or people we're just connecting with for the first time.

The fund is here to support new ideas – tested or untested. We are interested in supporting people to develop a credible and compelling sense of success for their project or idea. We are not afraid of failure – it's often where the greatest learning comes from.

The total fund that is available in any one year is £250k. We will be accepting applications up to 31st March 2018, subject to the availability of the resources within the pool.

The start-up investment is an interest free loan with tailored agreed repayment terms, over a long period of time. Access to the funds is for a maximum of 2 years (Wave 1 16/17 and Wave 2 17/18), and the repayment terms will be agreed on a bespoke basis and can be paid back over a longer period than the initial investment.

Importantly, if the project faces difficulties, there is no consequence of a failure of a project if advice and support has been actively sought from Here. This is an important principle - and one we feels nurtures new ideas and innovation.

Find out more about the fund and how to apply at www.hereweare.org.uk/start-up-fund

4) Approaches to Empowerment

Sophie Gibson, Brighton Women's Centre, presented on their approaches to empowerment when working with women. This covered:

- Women's centred working in Theory and Practice: what this means and what we understand by it
- Applying a women centred model in a commissioning framework: what would this look like?
- Wider applications of this model of commissioning for clients with multiple vulnerabilities



5) Crossing cultures and minding the gaps

Sarah Tighe-Ford, Equalities Co-ordinator for B&H City Council presented on her reflections on working across cultures and minding the gaps. This covered:

- How do we keep engaging and engage with more people?
- How do we find and build common ground so that we can work together with people like us - and people who aren't?
- How do we keep ourselves open to difference?

There are two main sections: about cultures and seeing what's not there.

1. **Cultures:** two big changes at the moment: one immediate, local and likely to be affecting everyone here; the other much larger – global even – rather less within our control, but potentially affecting us just as much.

Both are about culture – or rather cultures – and what happens when different cultures meet... and possibly clash.

The local aspect is the encouragement of more collaboration and partnership-working across the community and voluntary sector. There are many clear benefits to this in efficiency, meeting more needs, stability and so on.

But working with other organisations is hard. Working with other people can be hard.

Many CVS organisations in this city have been operating for years or decades. And over that time they've developed a really strong, clear identity, purpose, set of values, and way of working. In other words: a culture.

'Culture' definition: 'the way things we do things here'.

'Culture' includes the organisation's vision, values, what's 'normal' within it, systems, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits. We all have ways of working, things that we just take for granted. Lots of them might be unspoken or possibly even unconscious.

They might be about how we communicate, make decisions, talk about things, whether we're on time for meetings, or eat at our desks. When you start a job in a new place, one of the hardest things is learning the new culture.

So, what's all this got to do with anything locally, let alone internationally?

Bringing together organisations into a partnership means bringing together two or more cultures, which may not be very similar. But working with another organisation, in another way, changing what we do can feel like a threat to the way 'we' do things, the way 'we've' always done things.

We tend then to do three things:

- we polarise: highlighting the differences or contrasts between us.
- we make value judgements: placing a positive value on 'our' culture and a negative one on 'theirs'.
- we become 'ethnocentric': seeing everything from our perspective only

Which leads us to the international element: discovering that a partnership we thought we were all in wasn't actually as strong as we believed, as demonstrated by last year's EU referendum in the UK and the US presidential campaign. In these all the 'us and them' attitudes and polarisation and separation became clear, public and unavoidable.

And both led to high levels of anger and hurt and contempt. Trivially, people were unfriended on Facebook. More seriously, hate crime increased in both countries.

These events are all about how we see the world and our place in it: our futures, jobs and education, our security and safety – about 'how we do things'.

And we did all the things that we know we shouldn't: I know I did. I polarised, I was critical of people who took a different view, and I was sure I was being entirely reasonable and rational throughout (unlike everybody else...)

But we can't carry on like this - because you either have to dismiss 50% of the population... or work out another tactic.

And this applies at all levels: how we negotiate the temperature in the office, or whether the lights are on full or dimmed, who buys the milk. And it applies when working out how we're going to run joint assessment sessions, share information on clients, jointly generate monitoring reports, engage in outreach together. All of this requires us to review 'the way we've always done it' and be really honest and challenge ourselves: could that be better?

And how do we negotiate the differences between cultures and find the common ground nationally and internationally? How do we work out what we all value and what we see differently? And what do we do about all of that?

Because the smaller, more local clashes of culture are where we learn how to manage bigger clashes - or don't. And smaller break-downs can multiply or set patterns and start to influence the bigger picture.

So what can we do about it?

- a) Bring people together – especially people who don't think like you. Don't have an argument about who's right and wrong – have a conversation. And work out what you can do next.
- b) Try to be open to the best in cultures – any culture, every culture. What's the common ground? How can we find it, share it and then make it wider?
- c) Give it time. Changing minds is hard – especially our own. If we rush it, it won't stick. Keep talking and keep reflecting.

Doing this won't fix everything – locally, let alone nationally and internationally. But it might make a difference. And it's not going to get better on its own.

2. 'Mind the gaps' seeing what's not there.

My role is to review a service with the people who run it, and to look for who's missing. Which people in our city don't know about it? Who isn't using it and benefiting? Who isn't a staff member or volunteer in that service or organisation? Who's missing? And why?

What's the barrier? What's the action we could be taking? Are we in the wrong place? Is our message not getting to the right people in the right language at the right time? Are we trusted? Are we seen as being for 'other people', not for 'me'?

The council has specific duties under the Equality Act 2010. Equality monitoring and equality impact assessments are two essential elements. (All our EIAs are listed on our website.) But

CVS groups and private businesses also have legal duties to make sure their services are accessible. So:

- If you don't already know who's using or running your service, start to find out.
- If you know or think there are gaps in that, start to work out why.
- Then work out what you can do about it – and take action.
- Finally, check it's worked:
 - If it didn't, then you might need to explore a little more and do something else.
 - If it did, tell people – to share the learning and also so people know you've made the an improvement.

And the link between crossing cultures and minding the gap? Maybe we get too fixed in 'how we've always done things' and don't notice that the world has moved on. Who we're working with (service-users and colleagues) isn't representative of the city now. This can lead to collaboration and change and conversation. It can be positive and hopeful – and hard sometimes.

And my learning from the last year? My conversations need to be more challenging, not less; I need to question my assumptions over and over again; I've got to find common ground, even with the people I think are least likely to share it.

And finally, some questions for all of us:

- What matters to us? And where does that give us common ground with others?
- What can we do together?
- And where we don't have common ground, how will we react? How will I react?

I don't think we have all the answers, but I think the last year has shown us that we need to work even harder to find them. Even with people whose answers might be different from ours.