

## Carers' Conference 2008

### Conference Report

#### Day One – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008

Approximately 85 people attended the carers' conference on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February, which was opened by Bill McKenzie (chair of carers forum) and Councillor Cousins.

**Vivien Cooper** (Coordinator of the South East Regional Carers' Network and member of the Learning Disability Task Force) provided an overview of the recent Valuing People Now paper, which outlines four main priorities within learning disability and how to make those things happen. She informed everyone that the four main priorities are:

1. To ensure that people have more choice and control over their lives and services through person centred planning and the use of Individual Budgets (Personalisation)
2. To give more attention to what people do in the days and evenings – including supporting more people into entering paid employment. There are government initiatives 'Progression Through Partnership' to improve college courses and 'Getting a Life' to help people with a learning disability to get what they want and spending more time doing things they choose rather than going to day centres.
3. To ensure that the health of people with a learning disability is supported through increased promotion of health action planning and improved health provision from GPs and PCTs.
4. To provide people with a learning disability more choice and control over where they live and that long stay hospitals should be closed down. Local Authority care managers need to support people with learning disabilities to live in their own homes or have tenancies in rented housing. Within three years no one should have the NHS as his or her landlord.

Vivien also presented the wider agenda of Valuing People Now, which is committed to supporting advocacy and rights, continued partnership working with families and ensuring that Valuing People works for everyone. She informed the audience that the biggest priority was to make the above things happen within the next three years through local and national support..

**Sarah Mitchell** (Director of Community Services) presented a summary of national policy developments and gave an outline of local service user needs by providing a demographic picture of people with a learning disability on the island and how spending on their personal services are currently distributed. She then outlined the framework for ongoing and future local service delivery. This is to be achieved through a number of initiatives. These are to review and agree a model for integrated Health and Local Authority Learning Disability Services, to complete a review of services and to take forward an agreed action plan for service modernisation that includes the development of person centred plans and Individual Budgets, to close White Lodge, to ensure a sustainable process of planned transition for supporting young people into adult hood, to reduce the use of residential care, to review and plan future services for 'respite' care and increase the use of tenancy based models to achieve independent living. Further objectives are to review needs for linked education and employment opportunities, to improve the uptake of secondary sources of funding to support independent living and to develop a range of local provision to enable reduction on dependence on mainland placements.

**Laura Timms** (Learning Disability Modernisation Coordinator) presented information on In Control and individualised funding on the island. She began by providing the background development of In Control and how recent policy has made it a national agenda to support most people to have an Individual Budget within the next three years. Laura then outlined the 7 step process of having an Individual Budget and provided the audience with an overview of how the Individual Budgets agenda has been developed locally. This has been achieved by the set up of a Resource Allocation System for the pilot, the provision of a risk enablement framework, shared practice with Brighton and Hove, being active members of the regional In Control forum, by having looked at internal systems and identified what needs to change and also agreed a self assessment questionnaire. She spoke of the confusion around some of the In Control terminology and clarified people's understanding of their definitions and moved on to discuss future local developments. Laura finished by outlining the next major pieces of work that need to take place, which are a review of learning from the pilot, looking at the Resource Allocation System (RAS) 5, preparing for a wider roll out, changing how services are currently commissioned, supporting providers to change and to consider brokerage.

**Kim Cox** (mother and Carer of James Cox) gave an inspiring presentation on how Self Directed Support through an Individual Budget has changed her son's, her family and her own life. She talked about how life was for her and her family before James was on an Individual Budget and her experience of going through the process of In Control, moving from Direct Payments to Self Directed Support. She detailed how she and James did a person centred plan to inform her support plan. This, she said, opened up 'a whole new world' as there were very few restrictions to what would be agreed. Mrs Cox shared how being able to spend the budget on the needs of James has helped the whole family to be more positive.

### **Afternoon workshops:**

The afternoon workshops focused on topics that were chosen by carers and were important for putting into action the modernisation agenda and providing an opportunity to develop understanding.

### **Practical ways to start developing a support plan** (Pat Ready)

Seven people attended the workshop group, who discussed ways of involving the focus person as fully as possible according to their communication abilities. To support the understanding of the workshop the group looked at example (anonymised) plans to give them an idea of the kind of content that could be included. It was very much a question-and-answer session where people could relate information offered to their own circumstances.

### **Staff Recruitment / Employment Law** (Elizabeth Martin)

The workshop covered many issues regarding becoming an employer. Subjects such as writing a job description, police checks, insurance matters and using PAYE were discussed. About 9 people attended and questions were invited and answered. The people that attended valued the information and plan to use it in the future. Most people were unaware of the variety of help and support available if they were to choose to become employers.

## **In Control – question and answer session** (Laura Timms)

Lots of people had questions about the process of individualised budgets and the timescales in which they are likely to be rolled out. People were interested in the provider changes and where to start. This was an unstructured session where people got to ask a range of questions about the personalisation agenda. If you would like more information about In Control, please either see [www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk) or contact Laura Timms on [laura.timms@iow.gov.uk](mailto:laura.timms@iow.gov.uk)

## **Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

### **Day 2**

Approximately 65 people attended the second day of the carers' conference. Laura Timms welcomed everyone and thanked them for being there. She provided a summary of the topics discussed in the first day of the conference and introduced day two.

**Jo Poynter** (South East Regional Advisor, Valuing People Support Team) began her presentation with a look at the 2001 Valuing People policy that promoted person centred planning as the way forward in working with people with learning disabilities. She gave an overview of the progress that has been made since then; some people have person centred plans, some areas have charters, there is now year 9 and 10 person centred transition training, there are some facilitators, however many people still do not have a person centred plan. Jo then talked about the 'Big Priorities' for the next three years outlined within the recent Valuing People Now paper and focused on 'personalisation' through Person Centred Planning. The aim is to ensure that more people will get a person centred plan and there will be access to advice and training. The government will carry on with plans for individual budgets and help more people receive direct budgets. This will result in more people having choice and control over their services and more people will have person centred plans to help them prepare for life after school.

**Pat Ready** (Person Centred Planning Coordinator) talked about 'what will a Person Centred Plan do for the person I care for? Pat explained how in order to use an Individual Budget to meet the needs of the person with a learning disability it is necessary to have a support plan. A Person Centred Plan provides the foundation for a good support plan. Pat explained the *K/ISS* strategy, to look at what already works and to *Keep* it, what could go better and *Improve* it, what new things the person has identified within the Person Centred Plan and to *Start* it and finally, what is not working and to *Stop* it. She talked about how a person centred plan is about getting a life and not a service and taking a long-term view that enables people work towards dreams and aspirations. Pat answered questions on 'what if someone's aspirations are unattainable'; she explained how it is important to acknowledge people's aspirations and look at aspects that may be achievable. Pat concluded that it is vital to think how to involve the person as fully as possible and that Person Centred Planning did not have to be a formal process, as long as the persons needs and wishes were identified.

**Fiona Stock and Julie Miskin** (service user and Carer) gave a talk on how planning changed Fiona's life. Fiona gave a presentation on her experience on moving from supported living to independent living. Fiona sought help from social services after a family breakdown. They referred her to Milford Del, under a supporting people scheme and Fiona moved into shared supported accommodation. This provided a supportive environment that enabled Fiona to develop her skills, to reach her own goals and prepare her for the next step. Fiona explained how living in the supported accommodation was fun but communal living was often 'a pain' due to disagreements about cleaning and noise. After 3 years Fiona said that she wanted to move out. Her options were to rent either privately or through the housing association. Fiona said she chose to apply for a home of her own through the housing association. In March 2007 Fiona

moved into her own flat. She applied for a grant from Medina Housing and bought herself a washing machine and other items for her new flat. Fiona explained 'the not so good things' about having her own flat are paying her bills, however she 'has enjoyed the journey and made lots of friends and learnt lots of new skills along the way'.

**Alicia Wood** (Independent Housing Consultant) gave a presentation exploring alternatives to residential care. She talked about a number of different options that would enable people with learning disabilities to live independently within the community. One of the key initiatives is the Shared Ownership Scheme that is offered by regional Housing Associations. The homebuyer purchases a proportion of the property, and if they are eligible for an Income Support Mortgage (ISMI) that will enable the homebuyer to make use of an interest only mortgage paid by Income Support to purchase his or her share, up to £100,000. The Housing Association will loan the remaining cost of the property to the homebuyer and charge rent to recoup the loan. If the homebuyer is eligible, Housing Benefit may be payable to cover the rent. Alicia responded to questions from carers and assured them that these kind of schemes are well suited for service users with high needs. For more information on these topics, look at ISMI mortgages, Housing Options and Key Ring.

**Jackie Cookson and Sarah Cookson** (Mother and daughter)

Jackie Cookson followed by talking about her daughter Sarah who has Aspergers and how she supported Sarah with her aspiration to have her own home. Jackie shared her experience of the difficulties she faced in assisting her daughter, Sarah, to become a homeowner through the Shared Ownership Scheme. The shared ownership scheme is funded in three parts; by accessing a £100,000 Income Support Mortgage (ISMI), the Housing Association takes out a loan and charges rent to repay this through Housing Benefit and a government grant or a loan from the family depending on the area. Jackie got support with this process from Advanced Housing [housing@advanceuk.org](mailto:housing@advanceuk.org) and after months of working towards their goal, Sarah became a homeowner. Sarah said she found it scary at first but she had lots of support and now she loves having her own home, it makes her feel 'more mature and independent' which makes her feel 'happy and proud'.

## The afternoon

**That difficult first step:**

**Dedicated time with people around to help you get started**

The afternoon provided an opportunity for people to access support and advice to help them get started on developing a person centred plan for the person they care for. A wide range of information was made available and Pat Ready provided materials and information on Essential Life Style Planning to help people begin the process. This outlined the 6 'Keys to Citizenship', which are: Self-Determination, Direction, Money, Home, Support and Community. These are areas to be considered when developing a Person Centred Plan.

**Closing comments:**

On The LDPB website you can download the 'what next' folder for carers' which has information in that would be useful. [www.iwight.com/council/ldpb/](http://www.iwight.com/council/ldpb/)

If you have any comments about the day or would like to suggest topics for future forums and meetings, please contact Bill McKenzie (Tel: 752764), Chair of Carers' Forum. The next Carers' Forums are on 21<sup>st</sup> April and 21<sup>st</sup> July from 11am – 1pm at the Riverside Centre.