

The impact of wider policy developments on the programme including:

- The overall clarity of the Programme's objectives;

The Aylward Review did leave the programme with clear direction but a lot of the good intention on this seems to have been lost on implementation.

- The implications of, and emerging response to, the UK Government's Supported Accommodation review;

This review will have a massive impact on the supported housing sector in different ways. Firstly the Sheltered and Extra Care rent seems quite contradictory of the recommendation in the Aylward Review to break the tenure link. In Merthyr this link has been broken and older people living in any type of accommodation/tenure are able to access supporting people services. Everyone across Wales felt that this was a very positive recommendation and yet this does not seem to have been accepted at a UK parliamentary level.

The short term accommodation is the major concern as despite the fact that the Welsh Government put a senior civil servant on the job of looking into the whole structure for Wales this individual has now take over as the head of the supporting people dept. Although the Welsh Government said this was done because of the closeness of the posts the supporting people is too small and this will become a massive piece of work.

While status quo remains in the long term accommodation the most important thing about this arrangement is that all of the social housing sector were removed from the local housing allowance.

- How the Welsh Government might improve communication about the priorities for the Programme and the impact of wider developments;

There needs to be an improvement in the communication between Welsh Government, the authorities and the organisations working with the client groups. As an example, the new Supporting People Guidance (which initially saw significant

delays) was released with a consultation period, to which we provided a response to and are awaiting any feedback or revised publication. The Guidance is the most important way to communicate with all parties and at the moment we are working to Guidance from 2013 introduced to meet the Aylward review and the unification of the two pots and transfer to the authorities. This Guidance was also released prior to important legislation and the impact on the programme including the Housing Act Wales, the Social Services and Well Being Act etc.

It is the dedication in this authority, of the supporting people team and the planning group that keep the programme moving forward successfully.

- How best to align the work of the Regional Collaborative Committees with other collaborative governance arrangements;

Very difficult to comment on this as each RCC has been doing things differently and are of a very different and diverse nature. Cwm Taf is fortunate in that it is only made up of two authorities with similar challenges despite the difference in size of the authorities. However this good work could all be lost if the intention is to add Bridgend into the RCC area.

It is fair to say that all RCC's started from a different point; the Gwent authorities have worked together successfully over many years not only on supporting people but other social welfare and housing projects and developments. The north Wales authorities have also developed close links over the life time of the supporting people programme commenced in 2003. Clearly these two RCC's were initially more advanced than the other RCC's which were created in 2013.

An exercise could be carried out to map the existing regional boards/fora to ensure the RCC complements existing work and builds on this to maximise the impact of the Supporting People Programme.

- The lessons to be learned from the mixed effectiveness and impact of regional working over the past five years;

We need to highlight the difficulties/complexities of regional working despite a small number of authorities. There are some draw backs in this type of working in terms of size of authorities, working with different partners, more than one master i.e., so who owns the scheme, funding proportions, monitoring and evaluation. The areas have different approaches to unit cost calculations, how support is funded (i.e.

unit/hourly rate) which do cause some issues. However where regional working will benefit the service users, the authorities are keen to explore and work through any potential barriers.

2. Monitoring and evaluation including:

- How monitoring/outcome data is used to inform decision-making about programme expenditure and contract monitoring;

There has been no expansion in the programme over the last several years and generally investment in services is only available due to two circumstances:

1. Better use of the current fund, in Merthyr we are moving to a pricing policy which will eliminate all of the anomalies which were created by the piece meal way that additional grant funding was passed to the authority from the Welsh Government over several years.

2. By de-commissioning services where there isn't a need for them and reinvesting the money, although the outcomes would be important in this there would be many other reasons for taking this decision and the main one would be what data we are collecting on the main needs that are being presented to us by applicants for a service.

- The revised outcomes framework that the Welsh Government is proposing and the extent to which it will address the limitations of the current framework;

The revised framework will lead, hopefully, to less bureaucracy but the system is and always has been flawed and clearly just does not fit some client groups i.e. older people and those with a learning disability.

- How any revised outcomes framework arrangements can be best communicated and embedded;

The best way to do this is to scrap the current system and spend some time devising a new system which people and organisation can be part of We felt that the idea in the Supporting People Guidance this year that the Welsh Government should top slice money to devise a computer system was poor and more flexible approaches should be considered in the future.

- Other opportunities to strengthen monitoring and evaluation, including in assessing the relative value for money of comparable services.

The value for money issue has been dealt with in this authority by the introduction of a Pricing Policy and as such it does not need to be part of the monitoring and evaluation. The new Guidance that was issued had no mention at all about monitoring and guidance and removed the system laid down in the 2013 Guidance which is used in this authority and has been found to be effective, Regular monitoring and evaluation in an authority means the authority know who is working well and who needs to be brought up to a required standard .Regular monitoring and evaluation could be included in the Grant Conditions.

Regular monitoring and evaluation is a huge resource issue and many supporting people teams are short of staff due to the Welsh Governments insistence on the fact that none of the grant should be spent on staff, this was an issue raised in the Welsh Audit office report. While recognising the Welsh Government's concern there must be some flexibility in this area.

3. The distribution of Programme funding and financial planning including:

- The issues that need to be considered in developing and implementing any new funding formula;

Two major issues are; 1. How do the authorities that lose money cope and how do they decide which services to get, and; 2. Can the authorities who are to receive the money efficiently spend it? This would suggest that there many need to be a long (perhaps 2 years) lead in time.

- How budget pressures and funding uncertainty have affected service planning and delivery;

The budget pressure mostly has come from the fact that over last five years we have been facing cuts which as is the case now have not materialised. However this has made everyone from local authority teams to support providers being very nervous which has limited innovation and improvements. The major concern at the moment is the idea that the supporting people fund is being taken away from its roots in housing and merged with other pots with no clear lead from the Welsh Government and why and how it will work. Where will the money from the Supported Accommodation review go? Cwm Taf is one of the flexible funding pilot areas, where there will be full cross funding before the full implementation in

2019/20 but we feel that an evaluation would be useful before moving forward to allow for lessons learnt and maximise multiple programme impact?

- Reasons for the identified wide variation in financial support for different client groups across local authorities;

Much of this is historical and has resulted from the previous, more generous SPRG tariff levels.

- Reasons for the noticeable change in the overall proportion of programme funds spent on floating and fixed support;

Mainly concerns around the supported Accommodation Review.

- The extent to which local and regional planning processes and spending reflect well-evidenced needs, rather than historical patterns.

This situation varies from local authority to local authority. In this authority this was identified as an issue ten years ago and a system of data collection from people applying for supporting people services was created. This was done to address the question of providing services based on need and not on anecdotal evidence or those who put themselves forward.