RAN Advice Forum Report

"The new Health and Social Care system"

9ᵗʰ November 2022

Introduction

1   This was the third and last of our 2022 Advice Forums - all of which have been designed to help our member organisations understand, and build stronger links with, the Health Sector in Reading. But while during the pandemic we had several Forums where all the participants were online, this was the first one where our speaker was online, but everyone else was present in the Council Chamber. Fortunately, the technology worked well.

The Presentation

2   Our speaker was William Butler, the Chair of the BOB VCSE Health Alliance. The Alliance is the key body which supports health-related charities across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West, and represents their interests and concerns to the new Integrated Care Boards and Partnerships. William has brought to that role a great deal of relevant experience at a senior level in a number of national voluntary organisations. He is currently the Chair of Trustees of the Directory of Social Change, and Chair of the Thames Valley Cancer Alliance Patient Participation Group, amongst other roles.

3   The new Health and Social Care system came into effect on July 1 this year. The slides William used in his presentation, which are circulated alongside this report, sought both to explain the fairly complicated structure of the new system and to give those attending some insight into how this is being implemented in the BOB area. The slides set out, in turn:
  • The aims of the Alliance
  • The range of factors that determine health outcomes
  • What the Integrated Care System (ICS) is trying to do
  • Some of the key current needs and priorities
  • The ICS key terminology - 'system', 'partnership', 'place' and 'neighbourhood'
  • The roles of its key players - the Integrated Care Board, the Integrated Care Partnership', 'Place-based Partnerships' and 'Provider Collaboratives'
  • The respective responsibilities of the Integrated Care Board and the Integrated Care Partnership
  • How BOB is developing its Integrated Care Strategy
  • The arrangements for the various BOB 'Places' - essentially Local Authority areas - and the responsibilities of their Integrated Care Partnerships
  • Key data on the size and scope of the BOB Integrated Care System
  • What the partnerships, at BOB and Place level, are aiming to achieve
  • The importance of co-production with service users in developing and delivering health and care services
  • The attributes of voluntary organisations that support integration

• The main challenges that the Integrated Care System must overcome to be successful

4   In addition, William highlighted:
   • The importance of taking action on all the factors that determine health outcomes
   • The conflict between the increasing demand for services and the reducing resources for those services
   • The risk that Integrated Care Boards and Partnerships will focus mainly on health services
   • The importance to BOB of the subsidiarity principle - taking decisions as close as possible to the communities those decisions will affect
   • The requirement on BOB to agree its initial Integrated Care Strategy by December - a very tight deadline
   • BOB's commitment to co-production, but also the amount of work that will be needed to make that happen

Discussion Groups

5   After the presentation participants broke into discussion groups to discuss three questions:
   • How can your organisation best link to the new Health and Social Care system ?
   • What problems do you foresee in making these links work - so you can influence the system to resolve any issues that arise for your clients?
   • How might these problems be overcome?

6   The key points emerging from the discussions were as follows:
   • We want to help shape the strategy. We support co-design and co-production - it's the way we naturally work - and we would love to develop close and trusting relationships with those who commission services. But they have to want that too, invest in developing them, and explain how they see co-production working
   • There is a big power imbalance between the voluntary sector and the statutory organisations and structures that control the funding. They should be asking how they can connect with us, not the other way round
   • The pandemic, and the cost of living crisis, has increased the demand on voluntary organisations, while fundraising has become more difficult. We don't have the resources - particularly staff - to attend lots of meetings to get ourselves known, publicise our work, and argue for the needs of our clients. Where we have shared information with the statutory organisations we don't see it being used.
   • The NHS and the Care Sector also lack the staff and other resources to make this work, and this is only likely to get worse. Long waiting times for GP appointments or other services undermines the effectiveness of these services.
   • But the Alliance Sub-groups are one way in. One or two of them are working well, but they don't all have members with enough energy, passion or resources
   • Healthwatch could also be an important link for voluntary sector organisations

- Given the pressures on individual voluntary organisations, perhaps RAN could have a role in attending meetings and articulating the views of its members
- It would be helpful to have named points of contact in the new system
- The presentation did not say enough about relationships, or about the major role of the private sector in, for example, residential and domiciliary care

7   Having listened to these points being made in a short plenary session, William responded as follows:

- Resources and capacity, for everyone involved, are major issues, and the statutory organisations don't yet recognise the scale of support they need to provide to really engage service users
- Place Directors, who have now all been appointed, are a key point of contact. [The. Place Director for Reading is   ]
- Do join the Alliance. The sub-groups are an important route in, and the Learning Disabilities and Autism sub-group is working particularly well. [There are three other sub-groups - Ageing Well, Mental Health and Reducing Health Inequalities]
- Use existing networks as access points where you can
- Engaging the private sector is important, but there hasn't been any visible focus on this yet.

Conclusion
8   The Forum concluded with a warm 'thank you' to William for stimulating an excellent Forum.

Richard Harrison - Chair, Reading Advice Network