



## RAN Advice Forum Report

### “RAN - New Partnerships”

**March 16, 2023**

#### Introduction

1 The aim of this Forum was to give those attending an opportunity to understand how advice services in Reading were changing, and in particular to hear how a number of new partnerships, several created by Reading Borough Council's recent 'Closing the Gap' funding round, were working out.

2 After a short welcome by Richard Harrison, RAN Chair, two member organisations - Reading Welfare Rights and Reading University Students Union Advice Service - who had recently achieved the RAN Quality Standard, were presented with their certificates.

#### Presentations

3 We then moved onto the main business of the Forum. The following presenters spoke about the partnerships in which they were involved:

- Matt Harrison and Katherine Shepherd - the Tackling Poverty Partnership
- Matt Taylor - the Wellbeing Partnership
- Francesca Yates - the Carers Partnership
- Jane Stanford-Beale and Ruth Pearse:
  - the Mencap and Autism Berkshire Partnership
  - Autism and ADHD Support for 0 - 18s
  - the Pan-Berkshire Adults Support Contract

4 The slides they used are attached alongside this report.

#### **A Tackling Poverty**

5 This partnership brings together seven charities:

- Christian Community Action
- CIRDIC
- CommuniCare
- Readifood
- Reading Community Learning Centre
- Reading Welfare Rights
- The Mustard Tree

6 The presentation included a short video, and made a series of points about the advantages of working together:

- Together they reach more people and can offer them a more complete service. Many of those in poverty have complex needs - the partnership brings together a range of different expertise and support services
- People only have to give their name and address once
- The organisations operate a number of different drop-ins across Reading, so those in need can access the partnership's services from a range of locations
- It takes time to build trust with those in need. The existing relationships with a single member of the partnership can give those in need the confidence to access other partnership services

## **B Wellbeing**

7 This partnership brings together five charities:

- Age UK Berkshire
- Age UK Reading
- CommuniCare
- Get Berkshire Active
- The Mustard Tree

8 It offers support to people from 11 to old age, aiming to tackle loneliness and isolation, and loss of confidence, working to empower them and support them to self-help. Key points from the presentation were:

- The wide range of expertise and services the partnership brought together - befriending, information and advice, exercise sessions, mentoring, home visits, and access to Age UK National experts
- The partnership provides multiple access points for those in need, including several outreach locations
- The partners have a depth of experience, and established signposting and referral routes.

## **C Carers**

9 This partnership is formed from four charities:

- Age UK Berkshire
- Age UK Reading
- CommuniCare
- Reading Mencap

10 It offers information, advice and support to carers in Reading and West Berkshire. The partnership effectively took over this RBC contract from another organisation, so it has been bedding in, but the feedback so far from carers has been very positive. Their priority in the first few months has been:

- Getting carers to understand how to contact the partnership
- Getting care assessments carried out
- Helping carers to understand what they're entitled to
- Helping them to articulate their concerns.

## **D Mencap and Autism Berkshire**

- 11 This partnership, between Reading Mencap and Autism Berkshire, provides:
- A range of different clubs for adults with a learning disability
  - Support for autistic adults who do not have a learning disability - focusing particularly on housing, employment, loneliness and isolation.
- 12 The presentation highlighted the forthcoming Autism Awareness Week, from March 27 - April 2, which will include opportunities for free training for voluntary organisations.

## **E Autism and ADHD Support for 0 - 18s**

- 13 This partnership brings together Autism Berkshire and Parenting Special Children. It provides:
- A helpline
  - Sleep courses, workshops and clinics
  - A Neurodiverse Children and Young People's Group, tackling issues around isolation and bullying
  - A Trauma and Attachment Service for Parents and Carers

## **F Pan-Berkshire Adults Support**

- 14 This is a partnership between Autism Berkshire, Frimley Health and Care, and Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire NHS. It provides:
- A helpline
  - 1 - 1 consultations
  - Drop-in problem-solving sessions, and
  - Workshops

## **Networking**

- 15 After the presentations had concluded, the rest of the Forum was spent networking. Thirteen of the twenty RAN members had set up stalls on tables around the Council Chamber and there were lots of discussions at these about current services.

**Richard Harrison - Chair, Reading Advice Network**