

Reflections on Practice – Self-Directed Support Across Scotland

Fife Community Support Service reviews

After the pandemic, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership responded to a demand for day and community support services by engaging with service participants and carers in a large-scale review and redesign of support and services towards more community-based approaches, including the development of a new social enterprise.

Our learning approach

The Fife Health and Social Care Partnership was facing a significant challenge pre-Covid with an increase in demand for day/community support services, particularly for younger adults with complex care needs. Whilst the Partnership's internal Community Support Service was identified as the ideal solution for some, capacity was at the maximum with little or no throughput.

A piece of work began to review adults who were accessing the Community Support Service to reassess their



Our work links with
**SDS Standard 1:
Independent support,
community brokerage
and advocacy**

**SDS Standard 3:
Strengths- and asset-
based assessment,
planning and review**

**SDS Standard 5:
Accountability**

continuing need for support, particularly from the service. The reviews would tell us about who could be supported in alternative ways, and help us find service capacity for people who are newly assessed. As part of the exercise, it was agreed that whilst staff would undertake reviews and support some people to move to alternative sources of support, for example, volunteering, alternative day service, paid employment, etc, no-one would be required to move from the service if they did not choose to or if an alternative could not be sourced.

The reviews were undertaken by dedicated staff whose focus was a holistic, person-centred approach which considered the needs and outcomes of the adults as well as those of their carers. Using local knowledge and our On Your Doorstep website (www.onyourdoorstepfife.gov.uk) staff worked with the adults to identify what they wanted to do with their time, how they could meet their outcomes in different ways and what would make a positive difference to their lives. This piece of work was paused at the start of the pandemic.

Our story of change

In April 2021, as services began to re-mobilise following the pandemic, four community support workers were seconded from our Community Support Service to the Self-Directed Support (SDS) Team. The staff had well-established relationships with supported people and their families over many years. They worked alongside the social worker in the SDS team to review 412 people who attended the Community Support Service prior to the pandemic.

To ensure that people could participate as meaningfully as possible in their reviews, the team used a combination of communication tools including easy read letters, signs and symbols, Makaton and talking mats to aid communication. Interpreting and translation services were used for people for whom English was not their first language. This enabled people to be fully informed when making decisions and choices about their choice of SDS option and how they wished their care and support to be arranged for them going forward. Independent advocacy was offered to everyone, and advocates were present at reviews for everyone who wanted one. Every unpaid carer was offered an

Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP), many of whom accepted. Everyone was advised of the complaints process and were provided with a copy in an easy read format should they wish to raise concerns and challenge the assessment decision following their review.

Those who were eligible for funded care and support were advised what their budget was. As part of the review, all SDS options were discussed and offered, and the decision documented. People then had the choice to remain with the Community Support Service, to ask a care provider of their choice to provide their care and support or to take a Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant or agency to support them, or a combination of options.

The importance of maintaining friendships built in the Community Support Service was highlighted at the outset. Those who weren't eligible for funded services and were able to travel independently, seek employment and to make their own decisions and choices were offered support to transition from the Community Support Service to other community-based activities of their choice. They were invited to a series of information events to introduce them to a new social enterprise company called Peace of Mind. In partnership with the project officer from the SDS Team, Peace of Mind established five new user-led groups across Fife. Each group meets twice per week in various localities, catering for 50 adults with disabilities of varying ages. Each member has their own MYPlan which captures their long-term aspirations and outcomes.

New members can self-refer to the groups and Peace of Mind are ready to sign up to Fife Health and Social Care Partnership's option 2 agreement and are keen to work with people who have a Direct Payment, as well as those who wish to pool their individual budgets with others.

Barriers and tensions

We had anticipated a high number of objections to opening discussions about potential changes to support and services however, overall, the numbers of those who raised concerns was low.

We ensured throughout the review process that we were transparent in our approach; identifying the need for the internal support service to change to accommodate the rising number of adults with complex support needs. In addition, we were able to open discussions about what mattered most to the adults and their families involved. For the majority of adults who were more able, their main wish was to re-establish links with their friends, to return to their place of work or volunteering or be able to access community activities again – all within a flexible way that suited them.

We were able to reassure families and carers that where it was identified that their family member continued to need the support of the Community Support Service, this would continue when the service re-opened.



Enablers

The closure of the Fife Community Support Service (FCSS) during the pandemic had a significant impact on the lives of many supported people and their families/unpaid carers. Support was interrupted, routines changed and opportunities to stay socially connected to friends, family and local communities were taken away. Throughout the period of restrictions, FCSS continued to provide a limited, outreach service to those people and families in the highest, critical need. However, this meant that many others had no day/outreach support for over a year.

Whilst it must be acknowledged that the pandemic caused significant disruption to support for many people, coming out of the restrictions provided an opportunity to revisit the reviews and to start again to explore alternatives with those with moderate level of needs.

With the establishment of a working group as well as a decision-making panel, we ensured that all decisions were equitable and documented, with outcomes for people clearly identified in new support plans or review paperwork.

Recognising the gap in the community for adults who were more able but still looking for groups to allow them to socialise or access community activities with minimal support, the Partnership identified a small budget to allow Peace of Mind to establish themselves in Fife as a test of change. This approach was new to Fife and through partnership working, both HSCP staff and Peace of Mind were able to develop this service to what it is today.

What we have achieved

Feedback from those attending the Peace of Mind celebration event include:

“ If one of us could win the lottery it would help more people to be involved in Peace of Mind groups. ”

“ I really like the Peace of Mind staff. They are amazing and help us out when we need it. ”

“ I like seeing my friends and going to different places. ”

“ I enjoyed going to the Fringe in Edinburgh. ”

“ Peace of Mind is Awesome. ”



If you would like more information about our approach, contact Alison Morrison, Planning Co-ordinator at alison.morrison@fife.gov.uk or Gerry Goldie, Project Officer, SDS Team, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership at Geraldine.goldie@fife.gov.uk