

## Devon Small Scale Provider Forum Meeting

Date:- 13.10.08

Time:- 10.00

Venue:- Step By Step, Dawlish

Those attending:-

Wendy Mason...chair

Jan Navran

Gary Bowld

Penny Bloomfield

Roger Thorner

John Southcombe

Apologies:-

Ian Greenaway

Mike Armstrong

Guest Speaker... Alison Meek...Teignbridge Social Services

The minutes of the last meeting were read and agreed.

Wendy Mason introduced Alison Meek to the group and welcomed her. Wendy explained that we had had a representative from Exeter Social Services at a previous meeting and thought it appropriate to invite someone from Teignbridge. She outlined the issues which the meeting wished to address to Alison i.e. the lack of understanding by Care Managers of the Supporting People criteria, the obvious discrepancies between the levels of 'take up' by the various areas of Devon and the lack of recognition for the vast amount of unpaid work put in by providers.

Supporting People criteria have changed and providers can no longer do certain things with Service Users. However, it is difficult to separate support/social time/emotional needs etc.

Jan Navran pointed out that, after Supporting People reviews cut hours, she went to Exeter Social Services who took up some of the shortfall.

Alison said that Social Services can only know needs if providers inform them. Perhaps a delegate from the providers could attend part of a team meeting.

The meeting pointed out that referrals often take too long and that reviews are just not happening. There is an expectation that support hours will always reduce but, more usually, Service Users reach a plateau and sometimes circumstances dictate that support needs to be increased for periods of time.

Alison said that all Social Workers are under pressure to ensure that support packages give value for money. Regular reviews are key but Social Services are not good at providing them. If providers were able to give ample notice of a Supporting People review, a Social Worker could be present. This possibility was discussed but it was pointed out to Alison that Supporting People review the service as opposed to individual Service Users and the process takes many hours so it would not be practical for a social worker to be present.

Alison also said that Social Services cannot provide funding to improve a Service User's quality of life unless it can be shown that the individual is at risk. They would love to do more were it not for funding issues but they have a fixed budget and often have to make hard choices.

The meeting talked about the depersonalisation of the services. It was felt that the government had underestimated the need and that, therefore, there have always to be cut backs. Supporting people and Social Services seem unaware of the difficulties caused to small providers who have staff with contracted hours. Providers have to subsidise services in order to ensure vital continuity of support. Many of the problems could be solved by more regular reviews by Social Services. The needs of Service Users change and the service should be needs led.

Alison asked that, when Social Services get things wrong, providers should inform them and ask for a Needs Assessment. She also suggested that, when a Service User funds their support through private means or ILF, providers should require a contract with a set period of notice.

The meeting discussed the reluctance of some Service Users to fund part of their package with DLA and that perhaps this could be highlighted to them by their Care Managers.

Alison said that the number of people requiring support has increased; more are surviving and wish to live independently though they should be given choice.

Wendy pointed out that the more Service Users and potential Service Users who are on the register the better the government funding will become.

Wendy thanked Alison for her input and, at 11.20 Alison left the meeting. The group felt that the discrepancies regarding take up between Devon Social Services areas had been very much highlighted. There appears also to be a lack of trust between Social Services and providers.

Questions were raised about the funding of Emergency Support and the difficulties and delays in acquiring payment for this.

Everyone felt that this had been a useful and informative meeting.

The meeting closed at 11.45.

Next meeting:- Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009 at 10.00 at Step By Step Dawlish.