10 Key Policy Challenges

The key policy challenges facing those supporting people with multiple needs

The 'system' that multiple needs policy and delivery works within is highly complex; its extent is far reaching and growing. Too many people have repeatedly fallen through the cracks within provision, over many years, and the situation is exacerbated by the fact that the nature of policy surrounding the issues continually changes. Austerity and cuts within public services have led to shifts in priorities at national and local levels, and have also been twinned with the perception of an increasing gap between acute and community based services, making it increasingly difficult for individuals with multiple needs to progress.

Stakeholders across the public and social sectors are increasingly seeking new and alternative ways to support those with multiple needs. Clearly, addressing the issues through piecemeal and fragmented approaches will not work and results in failure. Instead, places need to use their existing powers and relationships to collaborate and address the issue in a coordinated manner. Below are ten key challenges facing policy makers and practitioners, and the nature of responses required through a place and relationship based approach.

Policy Challenge 1: No two cases are the same

This could be deemed as being the case for any group of clients across public services. However, perhaps more than with any other cohort, there are often significant differences and challenges from one individual to another. This client group are relatively unique in this way, and it presents a key challenge for delivery within an established and rigid system that is increasingly disrupted by resource limitations and often directed by national policy. It requires a different, more bespoke response than for other services.

Policy Challenge 2: Disconnect and barriers between services

The continuation of single issue servicing raises questions about the current wider public service landscape, and outlines a system-wide challenge of recalibration in how provision is

designed and delivered. Current approaches do not work in empowering individuals; rather they result in missed opportunities, lack of trust from service users, and only addressing symptoms rather than underlying issues. As a result many will remain 'stuck' within a self-perpetuating cycle of re-representation across the system. Waves of Hope is working to influence this - however changing the architecture of public services is a long term challenge requiring cultural shifts within both statutory agencies and the broader provider base. The challenge is for all who are working within the system to reflect on practice and develop evidence for change.

Policy Challenge 3: Understanding which elements of the system can be flexed and changed to support sustainable approaches

Full systems change is ambitious, and in reality it is unlikely that wholesale transformation can be fundamentally achieved in a relatively short time within a constantly changing national and local policy environment. It requires an understanding of where there are opportunities for change locally (workforce development being one example) as opposed to nationally set agendas, and therefore developing an ongoing and deliberative process which gains traction over time. This links to a broader point, that in a landscape of continuing austerity and ongoing turbulence, success cannot all be due to injections of funding or special initiatives; rather citywide partners need to show how challenging the status quo through change management, values based collaboration and cooperation can itself lead to added value, positive change and better outcomes.

Policy Challenge 4: Defined pathways towards community reintegration

Does there need to be more thought about how, through effective journey mapping/pathway development, individuals can re-integrate themselves within the community? For those people who have progressed to a certain point, aspiring to greater participation within communities could be an important longer term step and help them break free from the cycle of acute support. This means structured pathway development work from the outset, understanding and working with broader community services, and seeking to close the

gap between statutory provision and the wealth of expertise and support provided by the wider voluntary and community sector. This links directly to a wider national public service reform agenda that is focused upon reducing dependence. Therefore work within this area always needs to be cognisant of the wider policy landscape, ensuring strategic fit to be sustainable in the long term.

Policy Challenge 5: Developing greater links to early intervention and other service areas

Liverpool Waves of Hope and many services for people with multiple needs are reactive to high levels of need. However, individuals will often have experienced trauma earlier on in their lives, perhaps as children or young people, which have been catalysts for negatively influencing their life-course and the decisions they have made. Could more work be undertaken in earlier years to understand/predict these 'red flags'/risk factors to avoid the level of complexity later in life? Many of those with multiple needs also have children; therefore can enhanced links be made with families and early years' services, to ensure that other related young people do not follow similar paths? This would require further thinking around 'whole system' approaches and linking together different service agendas that have traditionally been positioned in parallel, but separate paths.

Policy Challenge 6: Challenge of developing a model of effective service user involvement

This is a broad issue across many public services, where there is a lack of understanding of how to utilise service users as part of wider asset based approaches in design and delivery. Until services fully appreciate and understand the informed voice that service user involvement provides, and incorporates this in a systematic fashion, then many of the wider issues in terms of service design and delivery will remain. Achieving this requires support and capacity building, with a clear understanding of best practice approaches to commissioning which can embed an informed voice within the design and commissioning of services within the city. This necessitates accelerating the learning from the Waves of Hope programme.

Policy Challenge 7: Challenging traditional methods of measuring success

How we measure success directly influences how services are calibrated. There needs to be consideration around balancing quantitative outputs within traditional outcomes frameworks, and softer outcomes, to understand the complexities of individuals and the pathways they work towards. This means a shift in the minds of policy makers and commissioners who design services, to understand in more subtle ways how success can be defined, rather than primarily from the perspective of their organisations. Waves of Hope have invested in technology to measure softer outcomes on a regular basis, which could provide important learning demonstrating the value of more qualitative evaluations, and in turn have important implications into how services are commissioned.

Policy Challenge 8: Enabling voices from the frontline

Engendering systems change is not just about 'big ticket' policy initiatives and strategic discussions. Equally important is ensuring that the learning about what works and does not work is able to be filtered upwards effectively through a bottom up process. This means empowering front line workers to share their experiences and to provide the mechanisms so that this can happen. Too often there is not the time or space for front line workers to actively contribute to change despite the unique vantage point that they have within the system.

Policy Challenge 9: Articulating successful move on

Supporting people through a pathway of support is not a quick or easy journey, but there is a need to determine how and when it is appropriate to stop working with individuals as they build their resilience. This is important as the public service transformation agenda is predicated around a shift away from dependence on services. Attempts thus far to illustrate what successful move on looks like in practice have been limited, and part of the issue may be around how move on has traditionally been measured - there needs to be a change to considering move on in terms of the individual's outcomes, as opposed to for the supporting organisation, the latter which could simply involve transferring a client from one service to another, therefore 'recycling' across the system.

Policy Challenge 10: The need for a clear strategic plan for MCN

The evaluation discusses the lack of strategic leads for this service area, which results in fragmentation and confusion. In reality strategy, service design and commissioning for this cohort is owned 'by everyone and no-one'. This is due to the complexity of need that individuals with MCN face; the vacuum in strategic support means that people are likely continue to fall through the gaps in delivery. However, with complexity can come opportunity, through working with cross-agency and multi-sector forums, in order to create a vision and plan for MCN services that is founded upon collaborative working practice, and a clear consensus on what defines success. A strategic plan would also be intrinsically connected to wider place based strategies for addressing poverty and health inequalities, ensuring resonance across the whole city.

A progressive way forward to respond to the challenges

Values based collaboration

Responding to the array of policy issues is a significant challenge, both strategically and operationally. These however, are not unique to Liverpool or to MCN; indeed there are similar challenges across many public services which require urgent attention. The constant success factor though in addressing these challenges, would be through a 'whole system' collaborative approach where all of the key actors share and own a set of common values, which in turn provides the foundation for shared vision and approaches. Without this, many of the challenges within the system will remain, at an unsustainable cost to affected individuals, economy and society. Common values may appear to have a lack of specificity, but can potentially be built in through policy and commissioning structures, where the starting points are based on the cumulative experiences and outcomes of individuals, acute services and community organisations.

Facilitating the conversation for change

The challenge therefore is beyond the influence of one programme, such as Waves of Hope, and indeed a number of the issues are national, meaning that there may be limited scope to influence in some areas. However there is also a need to acknowledge that local needs do not all begin and end with Whitehall. Where there are local opportunities to change, they need to be taken. Waves of Hope can help facilitate the conversation for change, through bringing out the learning from the programme, translating this into policy messages, and disseminating to policy makers, practitioners and commissioners. Structures such as an Evaluation, Learning and Legacy Group, an emerging Community of Practice, and Lived Experience Hub, will be central forums for collaborating and evidencing the learning. Improving links to the voluntary and community sector, the development of a workforce development strategy, a shared Service User Involvement Policy, and investing in different ways of measuring outcomes are also some examples of where the programme is proactively working to support change and leave an important legacy for Liverpool.

Linking the learning to wider strategy

All of these activities are directly linked to wider strategic planning, through a Systems Change Plan and Priorities Framework for the programme. Cumulatively, this and the above provides the basis for capturing messages from Waves of Hope in a coherent and impactful way, providing the space for a wider conversation focused on how policy development, service design, commissioning and delivery is undertaken for this cohort in future, and the lessons this provides for wider public services as a result.

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