

Case Study: Support Brokerage in Northamptonshire

New role of working

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC)

Background

In April 2008 NCC published their vision and intention for the delivery of brokerage to respond to the changing way in which social services would be delivered in the future. The underlying principle of this vision was for individuals to be at the centre of the decision making regarding their future support they needed, the tools to enable choice, control and empowerment.

Key Drivers

The Government's vision in 'Putting People First' sets a clear direction and statement of intent for Self Directed Support. The Local Authority circular published in January 2008, Transforming Social Care, sets out in detail how the whole sector will need to change in order for this vision of choice and control to become a reality. In particular it highlights the importance of advocacy and brokerage if people are truly to be at the core of any decision making in relation to their lives.

Roles

The support to help an individual decide what they want and need and how to

accordingly spend their personal budget is known as support brokerage. The process of a person developing a plan for the support they need to live their life the way they want and how they intend to spend their personal budget is known as support planning. (Personalisation Toolkit 2008)

Functions of a support broker

- to find out what is available
- to explore what is possible
- provide information (signposting)
- give technical advice
- encourage and develop informal supports
- co-ordinate supports and resources
- assist the person to manage their obligations and responsibilities in relation to their budget
- facilitation to enable things to happen
- help with support planning and person-centred planning
- help the person speak up for themselves or where necessary to speak up on their behalf.

Key features to success

The key to successful outcomes is that people have trust in the person or agency that they have chosen to assist them to plan and purchase their support. There are various options that people can choose from in Northamptonshire including local voluntary and community organisations, peer support, centre for individual living, independent support broker, e-brokerage, NCC staff, service providers and family and friends.

There are no rules about who people choose to support them, but there needs to be confidence that the chosen broker has the expertise and knowledge base to be able to offer the widest choice of options available in order to meet the outcomes of the individual. Skilled brokers will play a significant part in ensuring that real and informed choice is available when people are choosing how their outcomes will be met.

Key learning points

The importance of providing adequate information to a range of provider and third sector organisations regarding the development of brokerage as well as internal staff is paramount.

A team of self employed independent support brokers was in place by August 2009 to serve the whole population, in particular those who self fund their care.

Ensuring that there is the facility to provide customers for apprentice brokers to complete their training immediately after they finish their training is vital.

Because of time restrictions it would have been better for trainees to obtain their own

CRB checks rather than using a third sector organisation.

Facility for the oversight and development of the independent support broker facility should be secured before training commences.

Conclusion

Recommendations show that empowerment of customers is still in the very early stages and more attention needs to be focussed on developing services that are delivered by people who have had personal experience of disability and managing their own support. Co-production needs to be a visible thread that runs through all the work of the County Council.

Evidence that self directed support really does make a positive difference to peoples lives needs to be collated and used to help to change the hearts and minds of those individuals and service that are resistant.

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