

Case Study: Citizen Leaders New role of working

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC)

Background

During 2006/07 the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) commissioned training events that would provide people who managed their own support or had done so on behalf of a friend or relative with some basic training in order for them to assist local authorities to implement Self Directed Support (SDS) by telling their stories and supporting others through the process.

Unfortunately there was no representative from Northamptonshire which left a gap in the resources that were to be available in the County.

In February 2008 work was done with the SDS project team to develop peer support, brokerage and third sector development. As part of this there was some investigation into the regional initiative and how Northamptonshire could become involved. Unfortunately due to distance there was not a Northamptonshire rep on the East Midlands Regional Training. However what this highlighted was the need for locally based training and this initiative was explored. The outcome was that a local Citizen Leaders Academy was established in Northamptonshire in July 08.

Roles

Citizen Leaders are all disabled or older people, family carers and loved ones of people who are using Self Directed Support (SDS) to get the life they want. They have a range of different skills and experiences that we want to help make SDS happen for everyone.

Methodology

A training pack was produced from resources used in the national CSIP course and was used to deliver a local Citizen Leaders Academy in Northamptonshire.

Participants were recruited from the NCC direct payments database and via the third sector. A second course was delivered in December 2008, this was marketed differently and was managed in partnership with a third sector organisation.

Results

- Currently have 29 Citizen Leaders that are trained and available for work.
- A third sector User Led Organisation is managing and supporting the Citizen Leaders.
- Citizen Leaders, through the user-led organisation, is meeting on a regular basis and has regular updates on news and events.
- Citizen Leaders are in the process of developing profiles for ease of allocation of work.
- Publicity material is currently being produced to promote the use of Citizen Leaders and highlight their availability.
- The profile of Citizen Leaders is being raised and becoming more know within the Council.

What Citizen Leaders can offer

Sharing stories of how SDS has changed their lives.

Supporting older people and disabled people, their families and loved ones to know about SDS and what it can mean for them.

Working alongside provider organisations, they look at how their services need to change to be more person-centred.

Provide a critical challenge to help SDS meet the needs of disabled people, older people, cares and loved ones.

Future plans

The continued involvement of Citizen Leaders is crucial and an integral part of the future workforce that is essential to the implementation of Self Directed Support.

- A further course is being planned for customers from Black Minority Ethnic communities. This course will take account of cultural issues that may have prevented people from coming to the previous courses.
- The management and the support for Citizen Leaders will continue to sit with the third sector however it is proposed that this role will be part of the specification of the Centre for Independent Living due to be available in April 2010.

Recommendations

1. Citizen Leaders have to be paid and local authorities should budget accordingly. At present Citizen Leaders are being funded directly from the services that use them. The danger here is that Citizen Leaders will not be used when service budgets are under pressure and it may be that another option of securing payment needs to be considered.

2. The effectiveness of having Citizen Leaders involved needs to be monitored and evaluated.
3. Citizen Leaders will need to be 'topped up' from time to time and funding needs to be secured to ensure that this happens.
4. The supporting organisations need to undertake a marketing strategy that highlights the need to include Citizen Leaders in their work.
5. The work of the supporting organisation needs to be monitored and evaluated both from the Council's viewpoint, and also from the Citizen Leaders to establish their level of satisfaction in relation to the support and advice that they receive.

Conclusion

The work of Citizen Leaders is crucial to the work of the NCC and should be seen as a developing workforce. It is also important to ensure that the initiative is giving value for money and is producing effective outcomes. This being said, the importance of hearing the stories of customers is essential to changing hearts and minds and helping those resistant to this way of working to see and understand the benefits from a customer's point of view. Without this element the process will be incomplete and as a result will not affect the change required.

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