



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

As self-directed support develops in England we are learning from people, families and practitioners about the kinds of assistance people may require to really be in control and direct their own support. The Yorkshire and Humber region have worked hard to understand and develop thinking about a supportive system that is empowering, useful to people and makes the best use of existing resources. This work has led to two key areas of development:

1. Understanding the new role for social work to support and enable self directed support - Developing the New Script for Social Work
2. Understanding the wider universal support system offered in communities to assist people to direct their support - Community Brokerage

We have shared the learning to date in a variety of papers which discuss Support Brokerage, Social Work and Self Directed Support in further detail (visit www.bit.ly/social-work-project).

This paper is one of a suite of papers which focuses on one element of community support brokerage and its link to the New Script for Social Work. This discussion paper aims to explore and support the development of community organisations and support services as an intrinsic element of the community model of support.

2. COMMUNITY BROKERAGE

Our alternative model of support brokerage is defined in our early papers as Community Brokerage, an approach that includes all people and organisational contributions, to ensure there is a range of supports available for local citizens.

Community Brokerage:

1. Starts by assuming and encouraging the capacity of citizens and families by enabling access to a wide information network
2. Facilitates the early use of peer support for everyone
3. Ensures access to community supports from organisations and associations within their community
4. Enables citizens to work with support services directly and to explore with them what options are available
5. Puts in place sufficient professional advisors, such as social workers or other specialists, so that everyone can get the help they need

The wider the sources of support we have in local communities the closer we will get to offering citizens a real choice about who they receive assistance from – the people and organisations that they believe can best understand them and their situation (see Figure 1).

If social workers adopt a facilitative approach and recognise the diverse range of potential community assistance then people themselves can decide which option is the right source of support for them.



Figure 1. The community-based support system

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Previous work undertaken across the Yorkshire and Humber region identified that most current assistance is given by social workers and that other community options are not often used. This may reflect the fact that self-directed support is still at an early stage of development rather, than any failure to develop these other options. However, if community brokerage is to be supported and developed, then the numbers of people utilising the various approaches must be more sensibly distributed across the range of options (see Figure 2).

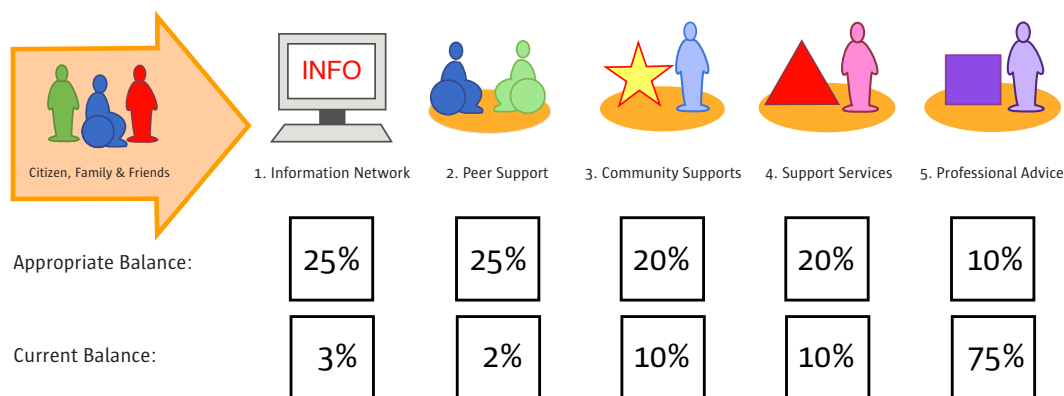


Figure 2: Numbers of people utilising the community-based support model

The full range of options in the model should be available to people from the outset, it is up to them (with support) to choose the form of assistance that they feel will best work for them. For this to be a reality local authorities must make sure that the full range of options are developed and available. It is important to remember that the community-based support system to brokerage **starts with the assumption that people can plan and organise things for themselves if we keep the process simple to navigate and access.**

3. COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN PRACTICE

One of the options within community brokerage is choosing 'community supports', which in this context covers those groups and organisations who already provide a wide range of activities and support in the local area. The groups and organisations are not necessarily connected to 'social care', however their skill and usefulness comes from their knowledge of the local area, communities and networks.

At its simplest level community support happens for many people at a very informal level whether it is: people recommending a group or community organisation that may be able to help, or someone from an organisation passing on information to people looking to find out what support is available to them locally. It is not a new idea; it is a way of using what is already available in order to help people think through their own support.

Examples include:

- A local summer play scheme that advertises its services at places where children currently attend, including the local carers groups. A parent then contacts them to see how they can help to provide support over the summer for their disabled child.
- An older person attends a church coffee morning where they talk to others attending about some of their problems and people there help connect them to people and services who may be able to help.
- The local football supporters club links with other community groups in the area to advertise that disabled people who become members get access to free tickets for their personal supporters.

It is important to remember that this support is already available and in some cases funded or part funded by the state, through Service Level Agreements, Grant Aid etc. Some people and families planning their own support already make use of community groups and organisations and find their contribution useful. The challenge for local authorities is to promote and advertise what is already available so that more people can access and use community groups and organisations when planning their support.

3.1 COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

On early pioneer in this field was Blackburn with Darwen Council (BwD). They initially ran two community-based events to bring together a wide range of community groups from across the area, to look at how support was offered and how this may be of use to people looking to direct their own support.

Of the groups that attended some were already closely connected to social care, others were not. They included faith based groups, sports and leisure clubs, carers organisations, specific interest groups, neighbourhood community centres and a range of social care charities and provider organisations.

The initial events asked what local groups and organisation felt they could contribute to ‘community brokerage’ and initially many thought that it was a specialist area that they did not or could not contribute to. However, once the key functions of brokerage were explained all of the organisations attending the event identified things they already did that could be useful, and how they could very easily provide this support either at no cost or a very low cost (see Table 1).

| SERVICE LANGUAGE | WHAT WE MEAN |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Information advice and signposting | Letting people know what you know |
| Facilitation and enablement | Offering a helping hand |
| Researching what’s available | Finding out and letting people know what’s out there |
| Technical Advice | ‘I don’t know but I know someone who does’ |
| Planning - developing a support plan | Thinking about your life now and what you want it to be in the future (small and big) |
| Co-ordinating resources and support | Making your plans happen, helping you organise it |
| Negotiation and mediation | Helping you if things go wrong and need to change |
| Advocacy | Speaking up with you, or for you |

Table 1: Translating the functions of brokerage

After the initial meetings a core group of people from the organisations attending came together to look at how they could usefully provide support to people who may be looking to think about and organise their own support. BwD have supported the group and provided a low level of initial support, enabling them to form a 'community brokerage network'. Free training has also been provided for network members who want to develop their organisations to be able to offer assistance.

Members of the network can engage at various levels from making sure that their group or organisation is known about (via a new online resource being developed by the council) right through to those groups that can offer direct support to people looking to make a plan for accessing a personal budget.

The groups making up the network have developed a simple structure to make sure that they can work together well and that people who may want to access their assistance can do so easily. They have linked to the new Centre for Independent Living which is being developed in the area. Their assistance is for any local person and not just those who access social care.

Blackburn with Darwen Community Brokerage Network, working towards a future where all local people who need support in their lives can get help from local community organisations to plan for a better tomorrow.

Network members are committed to working together to provide accessible, appropriate and free support and information.

Blackburn with Darwen Community Brokerage Network Mission Statement (June 2011)

3.2 COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN YORK

As part of the work developing the New Script for Social Work across the Yorkshire and Humber region, York City Council has developed a more co-ordinated approach to working with community groups and organisations in the City. Social workers going out to visit people and offering a personal budget needed to be able to give people a range of options for developing their plans. People could then choose to do it themselves, possibly with the help of family and friends, they would be given the names of peer supporters (other people and families that already have a personal budget) and also community groups and organisations who may be able to help them.

In order to be able to offer community support to people York met with a small number of community groups and explained the New Script work and what they wanted to achieve. The groups and organisations all felt that they had information, skills and support to offer to people looking to plan their own support. As part of the initial New Script work the names and contact

details of these community groups and organisations have been given to people who may want assistance. This help can range from information about what that particular community group and others can do, through to help with preparing a support plan.

The initial work around the New Script has shown that the majority of those people who have been given an initial allocation for their personal budget, have got on with planning for themselves.: using either the help of family and friends or community groups they were already in contact with. As the work develops it is likely that more people will seek support from community groups and organisations as they learn about what is available locally.

York City Council are now looking to expand the number of community groups and organisations who understand the New Script approach and who are willing and able for people who need some assistance to be signposted to them. The work is also building on the community-based drop-ins already provided by York City Council for people who are planning their own support. Community groups and organisations can now offer advice and support to people at those sessions.

4. COMMUNITY ORGANISATION OR PROVIDER?

As part of the community-based support system highlighted in Figure 1 a distinction is made between ‘community supports’ and ‘support services’:

- Community supports describes a wide range of groups and organisations involved in various community activities. Some of these may receive funding from the local authority but others may not.
- Support services describes organisations involved in the delivery of ‘social care’ services and paid to do so. This may include private and voluntary sector service providers.

Practice has shown that whilst most groups and organisations fall neatly into one of these categories, sometimes this is not the case and often an organisation will carry out both functions. For example, a voluntary sector organisation may have a free advice service and offer free drop-in support to people; it may also provide direct social care services to people through local authority/health contracts, direct payments or self funders.

In terms of offering community-based support around brokerage the need to make a clear distinction is not essential. Practical experience in both BwD and in York City Council has shown that both supports are useful and have things to offer everyone.

Support services have demonstrated a great ability to think creatively and to make best use of their knowledge by signposting to other services and groups in order to ensure that people plan supports that are going to best meet their needs. This is the case even when this means that people may use services other than those that particular organisation provides. Support services have also shown an ability to adapt and respond; listening to what people planning their own support want, services have developed new offerings and ways of working, developing the market and moving away from purely ‘traditional’ supports.

Where community supports and support services work together to respond to people wanting assistance there is great potential to improve creativity: to share good practice, new ideas and to provide a level of ‘self

checking' – ensuring that local people have access to the widest range of support available.

Many community supports and support services have aims and objectives that include community development and already view community-based support around brokerage as directly linked to their core organisational offer. Harnessing and supporting this commitment provides the potential for a 'win, win' situation; local authorities maximising local resources and community-based groups and organisations having a greater opportunity to fulfil their core functions.

5. PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

It is important to remember that community support is already available and working. To date our work on the New Script for Social Work has shown that in order to deliver on community-based support we need to develop and promote the model, paying close attention to the following key areas:

- **Using existing networks and structures.** Often community groups and organisations may already come together to discuss their work, new opportunities and local events. Use these networks to talk to groups and engage support.
- **Building an information library of local groups and what they do.** This is useful not only for developing an approach to engage with the groups and organisations, but it is also a valuable resource for people planning for themselves when thinking about what they would like to access.
- **Developing strong partnerships based on trust and respect between the local authority and community groups and organisations.** If people looking for assistance are to be well supported by the community-based model then all parties involved need to understand and respect the different and equally valid roles they have to play.
- **Simplifying the support planning process.** If more people are to complete their own plans and if community-based groups and organisations are to help, then local authorities must not dictate a process for planning by expecting complicated pro-formas to be completed and extended written risk assessments to be included. Community groups and organisations need to understand the principles of personalisation and support planning in order to offer assistance, but they should not be expected to complete complex local authority processes.
- **Providing opportunities to share information, good practice and creativity.** If community groups, organisations and support services are helping people to plan then they need to be able to share what they are learning in order to spread creativity and good practice. This could be achieved through a network approach, meetings and using IT based solutions such as webinars and blogs.

- **Linking with a wide range of community groups and organisations.** The more diverse the groups involved, the more creative support solutions are likely to be. In a simple system people do not need to understand ‘social care’ in order to come up with common sense solutions and creative responses. This also provides a ‘challenge’ to more traditional support solutions in planning.
- **Developing a ‘can do’ approach.** This will happen by working with people who are looking to plan their own support and their families, realising that they are usually in the best position to decide what will work for them. If people do need some help and assistance in thinking through support then adopting a similar approach with peer supporters and community groups and organisations is crucial: keeping things simple and based on what will work for each individual (and not what any current systems demand in terms of inputs, monitoring and returns).

6. CONCLUSION

At the moment there is still a fairly traditional approach to personalisation and the role of social workers in the design and delivery of social care services. The New Script requires that a different approach is taken; an approach which promotes and supports the essence of self-directed support. It recognises that most people are able to think through and plan their own lives. Where they do need some assistance then community-based support brokerage relies on a wide range of options being available.

Many community groups and organisations already help people in a very informal and natural way to think through support solutions that may work for them. When those community groups and organisations are given the opportunity to provide this help in a more structured way, they can then do so in a way that works for the people they hope to assist. The use of community-based supports provides a richer and more diverse range of options for people and families to access.

This paper has highlighted two examples of practice where local authorities have invited a wide range of people, including community networks and agencies and service and support providers, to create a level of assistance that is available to local people. The premise behind this approach was that the capacity for assistance already exists, but needed to be organised in a way that made sense to people looking to direct their own support.

The outcome for an area will ultimately be shaped by what makes sense for that community. We have identified five practical stages that are useful in locating and building on existing community capacity.

1. Identify Supports
2. Develop a Shared Vision
3. Connect and Organise
4. Commit to Action
5. Reflect and Change

| |
|--|
| <p>IDENTIFY SUPPORTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use existing community champions and community information ● Look beyond social care ‘usual suspects’ ● Open invitation - the more diverse the better ● Keep things informal and welcoming |
| <p>DEVELOP A SHARED VISION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep information clear and avoid ‘service language’ ● Share the challenge of personalisation and community assistance in simple and concise ways ● Don’t over facilitate - keep genuine conversation open ● Encourage all contribution and stay open to all possibilities |
| <p>CONNECT AND ORGANISE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communities determine the partnership - what it will look like and what they can offer ● Keep it simple and free from bureaucracy ● Trust in people and organisations ● Keep a common sense approach to keeping groups and organisations safe |
| <p>COMMIT TO ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don’t wait for things to be perfect to get started ● Learn by doing - ‘do no harm’ ● Work together to understand assistance in practice ● Simple, easy proformas can be useful guides |
| <p>REFLECT AND CHANGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create opportunities for all people to come together to learn ● Explore what works and what doesn’t work and use this to learn and develop ● Keep open to new contributions and new community interest ● Celebrate success and share good news stories |

Table 2. Identifying and building community capacity for community brokerage

Personalisation is often put forward in a way that can exclude non social care professionals and over complicates what is in essence a simple process - people designing support solutions that they think will work for them. There are many examples of people and their families who have explored and designed good support with community assistance.

Personalisation demands a better response from all agencies involved in social care and requires both a shift in thinking and practice in how

we support people. There are a wealth of resources, talent, knowledge and expertise in communities. The New Script for Social Work provides a framework for linking people to these rich resources and embedding them in a community of assistance.

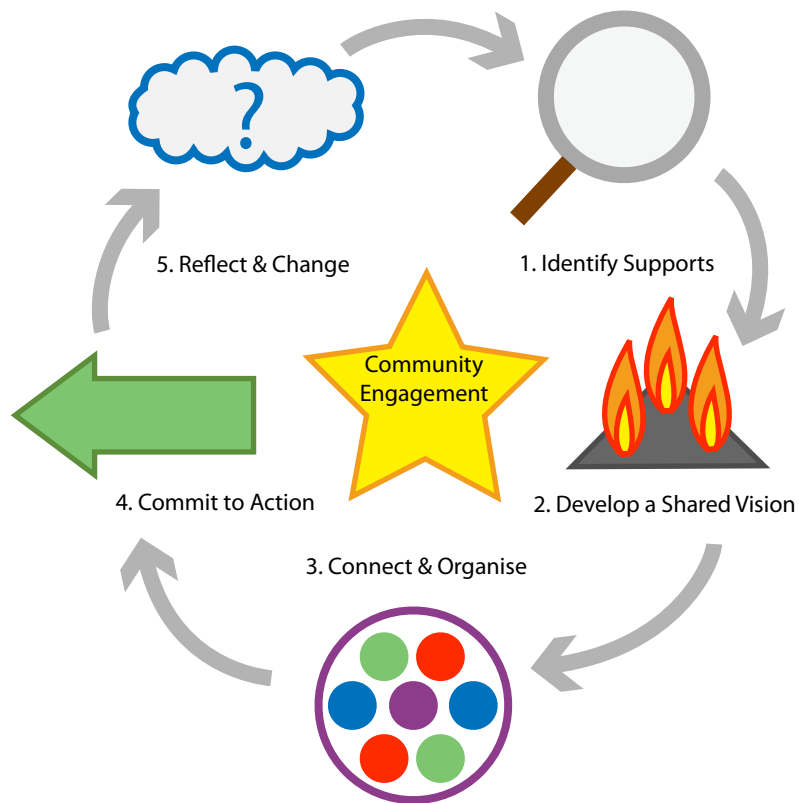


Figure 3. Community Engagement

BIBLIOGRAPHY

If you are interested in the detailed thinking behind the ideas set out in this paper then the best report to read is *Architecture for Personalisation* by Duffy & Fulton available to download directly from The Centre for Welfare Reform website (www.centreforwelfarereform.org).

For a full reading list go to www.bit.ly/social-work-project.

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