

A new vision for adult social care: scoping service users' views

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During 2004 the Department of Health initiated a debate about the future 'vision' for adult social care services. The Social Policy Research Unit conducted a review of recent literature from service user and other relevant organisations. The aim was to find out what adult service users wanted from social care services. The review also compared the aspirations of adult service users against the consultation framework for children's services set out in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*.

Older and disabled adults and other service users want services to help them maintain their independence and social roles, and to contribute to their families and community. An adequate income, cleanliness, comfort and safety are also important outcomes, as are information and support to keep healthy.

These outcomes contrast with current social care and NHS services, which focus on remedying dependency and deficits rather than promoting independence and well-being.

Designing services to meet this 'vision' requires a comprehensive approach, with well co-ordinated and easily accessible services. Services need to offer small amounts of support on a long-term, preventive basis, as well as rapid, flexible crisis responses. They need to be tailored to individual needs and circumstances, supporting service users' social activities and community participation as well as meeting their physical needs.

Implementing this new 'vision' will require co-ordinated action at central government, local government and community levels, complemented by initiatives to help individual service users exercise greater choice and control over their lives.

All these aspirations are broadly compatible with the outcomes that were proposed for children's services in *Every Child Matters*. Identifying and building on synergy between the 'vision' for adults' and children's services will be important as changes in both sectors are implemented locally.

Background

During 2004, the Department of Health initiated a debate about a 'new vision' for adult social care services. The Social Policy Research Unit at the University of York reviewed the available evidence on how users of adult social care services thought services should be organised and delivered in the future. In particular, we wanted to identify and prioritise the outcomes – the effects or impacts – that users hope will result from using social care services. We also wanted to see how far the aspirations of adult social care service users are compatible with the framework for children's services that was proposed in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*.¹

Key outcomes from adult social care services

We identified ten key outcomes that service users value and hope to achieve by using social care services (Box 1). These outcomes contrast with current services, in both social care and the NHS, which tend to focus on remedying impairment and deficiency rather than promoting independence and well-being. Maintaining independence, for example, involves much more than just improving physical functioning; environmental and organisational barriers and attitudes also need tackling. Social care services can help by providing support that increases users' sense of autonomy and identity; their capacity to be in control; and their opportunities to make decisions about their own lives.

As well as the material aspects of personal and environmental cleanliness and comfort, these outcomes also have important social dimensions. Thus service users seek support in maintaining their social relationships; in having opportunities for leisure, learning and employment; and in contributing to wider family and community life. Services that focus solely on physical care needs overlook the very substantial contributions to mental well-being and quality of life that can result from a broader approach to social support and independence. Similarly, social care services have an important role in facilitating access to a wide range of other mainstream services, particularly for groups such as people with learning disabilities who may otherwise experience social exclusion. Both broader social support services and improvements in access to mainstream services also have crucially important preventive functions, delaying or averting mental ill-health as well as physical deterioration.

These outcomes closely resemble the outcomes that were identified in *Every Child Matters* as priorities for children's services (though the subsequent implementation guidance *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* suggests the detailed content of the children's services outcomes may be modified) (Box 2).

Service principles

The outcomes that adults wish to achieve from social care services have implications for the ways in which those services are delivered (Box 3).

Service users repeatedly call for an approach that treats them individually as a 'whole person' and offers services that are already 'joined up', rather than having themselves to seek services from a number of different agencies. For the commissioners and providers of services, this means building partnerships and service networks around shared, user-focused goals rather than organisational structures. A comprehensive model

Notes:

(1) Since this review was carried out, the Children Act 2004 has been passed and guidance on implementation of *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* has been published. However, there remain many areas of similarity between the aspirations for children's services and those for adult services reported in this review.

Box 1: New Vision for Adult Social Care: Ten Outcomes

1. Maintaining independence
2. Keeping clean and comfortable
3. Enjoying a clean and orderly environment
4. Being safe
5. Sustaining social contact and company
6. Keeping active and alert
7. Living healthier and longer lives
8. Maintaining an adequate income
9. Having opportunities to contribute to family and community
10. Feeling valued

Box 2: Outcomes for adults and children & young people compared

Children's services	Services for adults
Being Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ living healthier and longer lives ■ keeping active and alert ■ maintaining independence
Staying Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ keeping clean and comfortable ■ enjoying a clean and orderly environment ■ being safe
Enjoying and Achieving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ maintaining independence ■ access to social contact and company ■ feeling valued ■ enjoying a clean and orderly environment
Making a Positive Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ keeping active and alert ■ employment opportunities ■ maintaining independence ■ being able to contribute to community life
Economic Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ an adequate income ■ employment opportunities ■ feeling valued ■ maintaining independence

Box 3: Principles of Service Delivery

1. Whole person approach – a broad approach to tackling social exclusion
2. Whole systems – joint working between all agencies
3. Comprehensive – preventing problems and responding to crises
4. User empowerment – rights and the social model
5. Reciprocity – enabling service users to give as well as receive
6. Balancing local solutions with equity
7. Services tailored to individual circumstances
8. Services responsive to individual choices
9. Sustaining local communities and neighbourhood networks
10. Clear implementation strategy

embraces both targeted, crisis-related services and those that can deliver relatively small amounts of support on a long-term basis in order to prevent crises occurring. Services need to be provided in personalised and individually-tailored ways. Access to services needs to be flexible so that a comprehensive range of support is available from any entry point. Wider opportunities for service users to exercise ‘voice’, both individually and collectively, are needed, as are opportunities to contribute to the maintenance of social capital. Finally, local decision-making and service planning needs to be balanced by broader equity considerations.

Again there is a high level of consistency between these principles for adult social care services and those proposed for children (Box 4).

Levels of implementation

The aspirations of adult service users suggest that changes are needed at four levels:

- ▼ Central government
- ▼ Local authority/strategic level
- ▼ Community and neighbourhood
- ▼ Individual level

Although planning for a ‘new vision’ for adult social care is being led by the Department of Health, the comprehensive nature of service users’ aspirations and outcomes requires a ‘joined up’ vision across central government.

Indeed, given the range of aspirations, it may be more appropriate to think

of a ‘new vision for adults’ rather than for ‘social care’. Moreover, joined-up policy-making in central government needs to be matched by joined-up inspection and performance management regimes, as is proposed for *Every Child Matters*.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) can bring public organisations together with each other, and with voluntary and private agencies, to tackle issues that require co-ordinated action across a locality. At neighbourhood level, ‘single door’ information and service arrangements are needed that can facilitate access to a range of professional and other services. Locally-based services are also needed to support community development approaches that foster and sustain mutuality and neighbourliness. Finally, new methods are needed to enable service users to exercise choice – and support them in making choices where necessary.

Again, there is a high level of compatibility with these implementation principles for adult social care services and the implementation of *Every Child Matters* (Box 5).

Box 4: Service principles for adults and children compared

New vision for adult care	<i>Every Child Matters</i> reforms
Whole person approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear focus on ‘every child’ not just children in need of protection ■ Outcomes based in citizenship and community engagement
Whole systems – joint working between all agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legal duty of cooperation ■ Expectation of strategic partnering and operational coordination ■ Information sharing
Comprehensive – prevention and crisis response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Emphasis on both immediate needs and longer-term preventive interventions
User empowerment and social rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Emphasis on involving and engaging young people in decisions that affect their lives
Reciprocity – enabling users to give and receive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Children and young people making a positive contribution to community and society
Balancing local solutions with equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focus on outcomes and integrated inspection: steering not rowing ... ■ but comprehensive central regulation and guidance expected
Services tailored to individual circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Common assessment framework ■ Lead professional ■ Individual care plans
Services responsive to individual choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some tension between focus on collective choice and 5 year Education Strategy focus on individual choice
Sustaining local neighbourhoods and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Schools and children’s centres as hubs of the community ■ Multi-purpose locations for children and young people, families, communities and professionals
Clear implementation strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear implementation timetable emerging ■ Detailed regulation and guidance pending ■ Localities undertaking anticipatory implementation

Box 5: Implementing the adult social care ‘vision’ and Every Child Matters

Implementation Level	New Vision for Adult Care	Every Child Matters
Central Government Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ cabinet committee for adults ■ integrated inspection/performance management ■ supportive ‘change agent’ model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ coordinating cabinet committee ■ integrated inspection/performance management ■ regional change advisers
Locality/Strategic Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revitalised LSPs ■ strategic partnership boards ■ cross-agency plans for adult care ■ links with other mainstream local services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revitalised LSPs ■ children & young people’s partnership boards ■ cross-agency children & young people’s plans ■ officer and member leadership ■ links with other mainstream local services
Community/Neighbourhood Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ single accessible information points ■ integrated and responsive professional teams ■ neighbourhood-level commissioning ■ maintaining/developing social capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ community focal points: extended schools & children’s centres ■ co-located joint teams ■ neighbourhood links/commissioning with schools ■ community as source of social capital
Individual Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ single assessment process ■ information-sharing ■ enhanced care planning/pathways ■ process mapping ■ matching workforce developments ■ consumer-led commissioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ common assessment framework ■ information-sharing ■ lead professional ■ multi-agency care planning ■ matching workforce reform ■ consumer-led commissioning through school choice

Conclusions

A possible ‘new vision’ for adult care, derived from the views of adult service users and their representative organisations, extends far beyond the current parameters of the service. It is based on principles of autonomy, choice, independence empowerment and comprehensiveness; and is underpinned by commitments to rights and social inclusion. Moreover, the compatibility with the proposed changes to children’s services is high. This compatibility is particularly important at locality and neighbourhood levels, where considerable work will be needed to reconfigure organisational and professional relationships.

Methods

We contacted an extensive number of organisations representing disabled adults, older people, family carers, drug and alcohol users, refugee organisations, ethnic groups and other groups of service users. We also included specialist service providers such as Family Welfare Association, Family Service Units and Anchor Housing; and organisations like the Audit Commission and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, whose publications reflect high levels of service user involvement.

Each organisation’s website was visited and followed up with telephone or email contact. Organisations were asked to supply recent reports, published and unpublished, that reflected users’ experiences of adult social care services and/or contained ideas for reform from service users’ perspectives.

We obtained a much greater range of material by and about older people than other groups of adult social care service users. However, many of the principles underpinning recent documents on older people’s services are similar to those articulated by younger disabled people and the Independent Living Movement. Nevertheless, it will be important to ensure that the concerns of smaller groups of adult social care service users are not marginalised in any new vision for adult social care.

Further information

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Copies of the full report – Hudson, B., Dearey, M., Glendinning, C. (2004)

‘A new vision for adult social care: scoping service users’ views’, can be downloaded from the SPRU website: <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/newvision.pdf>

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