Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission Report

Embedding Strengths Based Practice in Adult Social Care

Lead Member: Cllr Sarah Russell

Lead Strategic Director: Martin Samuels

Date: 29th June 2021

1. Purpose

1.1 This report provides an overview of practice developments in support of the Adult Social Care (ASC) strategic priority, to embed a strength based model of support.

2. Summary

2.1 ASC has had a strategic priority since 2018, in relation to our approach to working with people who draw on ASC support:

We will embed a strengths-based model of support to promote wellbeing, self-care, and independence

2.2 This has been developed over the past three years, to ensure that people that we work with experience support that considers what matters to them as individuals. Whilst this is a simple objective, in reality there are many barriers to this being people's actual experience, due to process, long standing practice cultures and fears about our ability to meet expectations, if asking people what they would like to achieve.

2.3 The Director, ASC and Safeguarding, has been working with colleagues to lead a 'frontline-up' programme of cultural and practice change. This report describes the approach, what has been done to date and the impact this is having, and also sets out the next steps.

2.4 The report also draws to Scrutiny Commission member's attention our commitment to 'Making it Real', a national programme for strengths based working, and to the new ASC Leadership Qualities that underpin the management approach.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission is recommended to:

a) Note the report and make any comments
b) Endorse the commitment to strengths based approaches in ASC

4. Report

4.1 This report is in three main sections – Strengths Based Practice: An update; Making it Real; ASC Leadership Qualities. It describes each element,

4.2 Strengths Based Practice: An Update

4.2.1 *"Strengths-based practice is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets...'*
Care Act 2014: Strengths-based approaches. Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2015

4.2.2 Strengths based practice is a fundamental shift away from the controlling, resource allocating approach to ASC that was established through the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. Whilst the provision of resources in the form of statutory social care remain a key function of ASC, the Care Act 2014 created an expectation of person centred approaches, a focus on wellbeing and prevention and the need to consider the outcomes that a person wishes to achieve.

4.2.3 The change in practice has taken time, particularly given the context of constrained financial resources and a pressure on Councils to reduce spending on ASC, both on staffing and commissioned services. In the last few years, there has been increasing attention given to the experience of people who draw on ASC, the extent to which people are enabled to have meaningful lives and the opportunities to use a strengths based approach to harness individual, family and community resources.

4.2.4 ASC in Leicester established a commitment to embed a strength based approach, as one of its six strategic priorities. A small pilot at the community front door, to test the outcomes that might be achieved from working with people in a collaborative way, was followed by the creation of a new role (Practice Implementation Lead), to support all staff and teams to adopt different ways of working.

4.2.5 Whilst there is much national material about what strengths based practice looks like, there is not an 'off the shelf' product to embed it within an ASC organisation, unlike Children's Services for example (Signs of Safety). Therefore, ASC in Leicester has created its own procedures and guidance, training materials and assurance framework to deliver on the strategic priority.

4.2.6 In practical terms, strengths based practice:
- Starts with conversations not assessments
- Looks for potential and helps people to realise this by setting outcomes and goals
- Utilises what is available – facilitates creative and tailored options around the person which are not limited by a menu – avoids fixing problems and supports enabling solutions
- Recognises achievements by reducing formal support where appropriate - preventing a reliance on paid-for services

4.2.7 The diagram below illustrates the solutions considered with a person, starting with their own strengths and drawing in (clockwise from top) other resources that may help to achieve the outcome that is important to them.
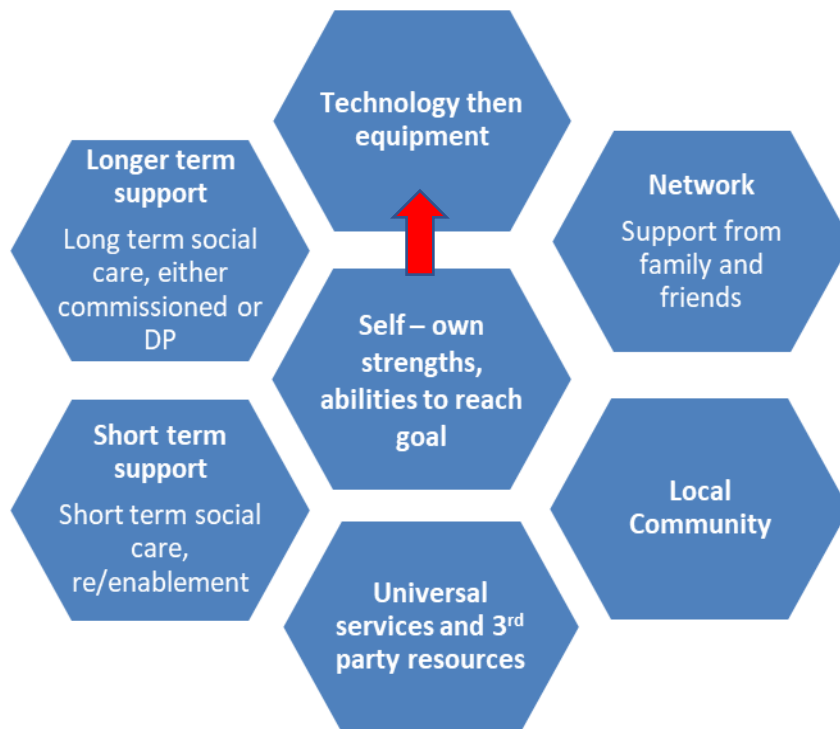
4.2.8 To support this in our everyday work, a number of changes or developments have been made, with the support of a Strengths Based Oversight Group bringing together representatives of all service areas to support implementation and drive strengths based action plans. Key to this approach is freeing up staff time to spend on direct contact with people to find solutions, rather than unnecessary paperwork and process that has no direct benefit to people who draw on ASC.

4.2.9 Some of the main changes are listed below.

- Revised practice guidance, uncovering barriers and gaps. This is focusing practice away from forms and process, building staff confidence in a conversational approach. This includes a strength based toolkit.

- Language changes, e.g. from 'service user' to 'people' - this has had corporate impact as its been adopted by equalities team. Language has a critical impact of how staff view their role, the people they work with and how people experience our contact with them.

- Redesign and implementation of the new assessment form, streamlining 3 separate forms / processes into one. This has moved from 120 questions to just a single form with 9 - 20 questions, depending on the complexity of the person's situation (i.e. it is proportionate). A review / reassessment form has also been delivered, in co-production with people who use our services and receive reviews.

- Revision of the ASC standard letters available through Liquid Logic, and those from Operational Finance, into generic, person friendly versions.

- Increased referrals into our advocacy support services by introducing a link in the assessment - significantly improving our legal adherence and impact contractually, while also ensuring people's voices are heard.

- Redesign of 15 standalone Liquid Logic forms, including 5 external forms. This has removed multiple word forms, stopped the duplication of information and enabled standardised referral criteria for all areas.

- Collating and celebrating case studies of success, including in the monthly newsletter - managing messages and promoting positive practice

- Strengths Based leadership programme for all Operational Leads / HOS

- Streamlined internal referral forms for our provider services and external services such as domiciliary care. The brokerage manager advises that this has saved her team 50% processing time for each form they receive.

- Attachment of all relevant practice guidance to Liquid Logic forms - so practitioners can access it immediately and it is kept up to date.

- Training has been designed, coordinated and delivered including assessment and review training, motivational interviewing training, and in support of the roll out of Making Every Contact Count.

- Cross-service / department IT access to ensure access to critical information, for example between housing and ASC, reducing the need for people to tell us their story repeatedly and to support risk management.

4.2.10 The relationship between people and their informal carers, and the impact of strength based practice on carers is important to note. Informal carers are a critical part of a person's network and the 'resources' available to help them achieve their outcomes. This should be recognised and enabled. However, carers have individual rights within the Care Act and therefore strength based practice is equally applicable to working with them as people, as well as a carer for another person. There is often a balance to be found in supporting a person to draw on informal help and supporting a carer to achieve the outcomes important to them. Clear, transparent conversations and work to help with resilience, contingency planning and mutually achievable outcomes provide the best route to creating a good experience for people who give care, as well as people who receive the care of others.

4.2.11 Impact

The impact of these changes, as examples of what is different, has been positive for those involved. A new Strength Based performance framework has been developed to capture the newly available data on outcomes and their achievement. Equally important are stories and feedback from people.

People who draw on ASC have commented:
" The willingness of staff to enthusiastically engage, listen and act on concerns has been refreshing and has resulted in a great coproduction, rather than us and them"

"The review process is now about me and what makes me happy, not about what service is available that might fit".

"My review felt really different in a good way – I was able to talk about things that I care about doing, not just tasks like washing and dressing".

Staff have said:
"It was all tick boxes; move on. The time I used to spend filling the form out I now spend with the person, helping them to do the things that make a difference to their life. That time has meant not one person has become eligible - they would have been before"

Managers have said:
"It's a pleasure to read assessments again, and to have a form and resources that help us build our confidence in supporting practice to change"

4.2.11 Next steps include the revision of the support plan and supporting domiciliary care providers into an outcomes approach to care planning. Delegated reviews will be piloted, saving social work time and improving people's experiences of support planning as a collaboration rather than council-led process. We will also be implementing further changes to legal forms, using DocuSign. These documents are currently very confusing and duplicative for people.

4.3 Making it Real

4.3.1 Making it Real is a framework for delivering person centred care and support, which has been produced by Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) and the Coalition for Collaborative Care

4.3.2 It has been adopted by many organisations and other local authorities, including the Association of Directors of Adult Social Service (ADASS) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

4.3.3 It provides an easy to use, jargon free tool to support change by setting out what good care and support looks like. It helps to shift the balance of power, moving towards working alongside people as experts in their own life and supporting them to live the lives they want

4.3.4 The framework includes a series of 'I' and 'we' statements that describe what good looks like from a personal and organisational perspective. There are six themes.

Having the information I need, when I need it	Keeping family, friends and connections	The people who support me
My support, my own way	Staying in control when things need to change	Living the life I want, keeping safe and well

4.3.5 ASC has formally adopted the framework and committed to Making it Real in practice. We have a co-production sponsor, Anna Severwright, a local resident who draws on ASC support via a direct payment. Anna is also the co-convenor of a national organisation called Social Care Future.

4.3.6 Our initial commitments centre around improvements to direct payments and our review process. A co-production group is being established to support ASC with everyday co-production, whether that be with regard to policy, procedure, commissioning or care management practice.

4.3.7 A formal launch of Making it Real is taking place on 8th July 2021, during national co-production week.

4.3.8 Links to the Making it Real guide and our public statement are available here for further information.
https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/makingitreal/

https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/makingitreal/directory/78/

Also available is a link to a contribution to a recent co-production event by Mo, one of our co-producers, where she describes the differences she has seen in ASC over the period she has been working with us on our review of direct payments.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFFlmi1HzUw

4.4 ASC Leadership Qualities

4.4.1 Leadership, to support the embedding of strengths based practice, is critical. A number of national research and professional practice bodies have identified that strengths based practice requires a different leadership skill set to that needed to manage within bureaucratic policies, procedures and guidance. A focus on relationships, with people that draw on ASC and between the teams and services that provide that support, is essential in moving away from a traditional, 'community care act' style of social care.

4.4.2 In early 2020, the extended ASC management team met together to look at what qualities we would need to see in our leadership approaches if they were to be enabling of this cultural change. Due to Covid-19, this large grouping was not possible to continue and the Heads of Service / Operational Leads in both ASC divisions continued this work, with support from the corporate Organisational Development team.

4.4.3 This culminated in May 2021, with a set of clearly articulated leadership qualities and an Embed and Sustain plan to support their delivery in our everyday work. These are now formally launched within the ASC

divisions and the focus is on embedding them fully with managers and leaders at all levels.

4.4.4 The Leadership Qualities are attached at Appendix 1 along with a Plan on a Page summary at Appendix 2.

4.4.5 The Leadership Qualities are complimentary to the Corporate leadership qualities, drawing out practical examples of how these should be seen in ASC roles. They also reflect the key elements of leadership noted within national research, which are referenced in the document.

Summary

4.6 In summary, this is a programme of cultural change, which is consistent with national best practice and the expectations of people who may use, or have future need to use, ASC services. Whilst it should have positive impacts in maximising the resources that people can utilise outside of ASC statutory services, it is not a financially driven agenda. It is being delivered within existing resources, as a shift in practice for everyone working within ASC and is having local resonance with our partner agencies, who have, for example, adopted the I and we statements in their outcome frameworks.

4.7 There is a substantial amount of work to do to ensure this experience is a reality for everyone, on every occasion and is therefore very much 'work in progress' rather than 'job done'.

5.1   Finance

5.1.1 The increasing cost of care of existing service users added nearly 6% or £6.5m to our start of year gross package costs in 2019/20. 38% of people had a package increase of 24% on average between the start and end of the year. The impact of the strength-based work may be seen on the rate of increase in existing care package costs which would be very welcome.
Martin Judson, Head of Finance

Martin Judson, Head of Finance

5.2 Legal

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

Pretty Patel- Head of Law, Social Care & Safeguarding Tel: 0116 454 1457

5.3 Equalities Implications

5.3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public-Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

5.3.2 Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

5.3.3 If the report recommendation to endorse the commitment to embed a strength based model of support in ASC is agreed this would lead to positive outcomes for people from across a range of protected characteristics as it will help to promote wellbeing, self-care and independence for people by putting them at the centre of their care.

5.3.4 Need to ensure equality considerations are embedded throughout the Making it Real Framework and underpin the ASC Leadership Qualities. It is recommended that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out as appropriate, to ensure any impacts are identified and addressed and mitigating actions put in place, e.g. changes in practice/policy. Further advice and guidance can be sought from the Corporate Equalities Team.

Sukhi Biring
Equalities Officer
Tel 37 4175

5.4 Climate Change Implications

5.4.1 There are limited change implications directly associated with this report. However, in line with its' declaration of a climate emergency, the council should consider opportunities to embed carbon emission reductions within plan and policies and delivery of its services and those of its partners. For example, this includes through reducing the need for travel, encouraging use of low carbon transport and efficient use of equipment, buildings and facilities.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 2284

6. Appendices
   Appendix 1: ASC Leadership Qualities
   Appendix 2: ASC Leadership Qualities – Plan on a Page

7. Background Papers
   None

8. Is this a Key Decision
   No