

## **Report for the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board 16th March 2018**

### **Impact of Funding Reductions on the Capacity of Voluntary Organisations to Contribute to the Board's Strategic Priorities**

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#### **For information**

The purpose of this report is to highlight:

- how recent funding awards to local voluntary organisations by Berkshire West CCGs (Partnership Development Fund) and Reading Borough Council (Narrowing the Gap II) could impact on the capacity of voluntary organisations to contribute to the Board's strategic priorities and:
- the possible impact of a reduction in preventative health and social care services delivered by Reading voluntary and community sector

#### **1. Background**

Reading's voluntary and community organisations make a significant contribution to the Health and Wellbeing Board's strategic priorities. At the January Board meeting we were pleased to hear that, although Reading Borough Council and Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) both face significant financial challenge, they both wish to support the voluntary sector to the extent they can. Further, that the Council and CCG recognise the value that voluntary sector providers bring to how services are commissioned.

We welcome the opportunity to co-produce a voluntary sector strategy with health partners to clarify future ambitions for partnership working and commissioning across Berkshire West. We hope that the discussions can be extended to include local authority partners at some stage in order that the voluntary and community sector has a clear "position statement" for future relationships with our key two statutory partners.

#### **2. Voluntary sector commissioning opportunities locally in 2018/19**

Applications for the Berkshire West CCG Partnership Development Fund 18/19 were invited for six weeks closing on 23rd October 2017. At the time, communications from the CCG stated that the total PDF allocation for 2018/19 was £325,000 (the same as for 2017/18), and that applicants would be notified in early January 2018.

Through the quarterly Infrastructure Organisation (IFO) Liaison meeting with the CCG in January, we were advised that of the 59 applications to the PDF, only 8/9 grants would be awarded, including the three IFOs and 3 youth counselling services in Berkshire West. In 2017/18, 27 grants were awarded through PDF, all to local voluntary organisations delivering health and wellbeing services to support the CCGs priorities. We currently have not been advised of the final number of grants awarded from the 59 applications made to PDF or the total BW CCG funding to the voluntary sector for 18/19.

Reading Borough Council has commissioned voluntary organisations through Narrowing the Gap II, the outcome of which will be announced soon. Contracts cover a wide range of preventative services including:

- Facilitating peer support and reducing social isolation for ten different demographics e.g. frail/elderly, adults with a physical disability, deaf and hearing impaired adults
- Supporting people to resettle at home after a period of hospitalisation
- Peer support to initiate and maintain breastfeeding

There has been some overlap in the health and wellbeing outcomes of services commissioned from voluntary organisations by the Council and CCG. In Narrowing the Gap II, a number of the services will now be joint funded, including:

- Facilitating peer support and reducing social isolation for adults who have experienced mental ill-health
- Carers advice and information support
- Social prescribing

### **3. Possible impact of the reduction in grants awarded through the Partnership Development Fund**

We wanted to understand how a reduction in the number of grants awarded through PDF could impact on voluntary organisations' continuing capacity to support vulnerable people in Berkshire West and prevent/reduce the demands on statutory services.

We sent an on-line survey to all organisations which had previously received funding through PDF, or we were aware had applied for 18/19 funding. We asked what was the likely impact of no funding from the CCGs on the organisation and the people who use their services. We also asked about "the possible impact on statutory health and social care services if your service is reduced or closed".

We received 17 responses to the survey from organisations across Berkshire West. 10 organisations gave permission for their responses to be attributed to their organisation: Reading Refugee Support Group, Age UK Reading, Reading Mencap, Berkshire Youth, Me2Club, Cruse Bereavement Care (Thames Valley Berkshire), Dingley's Promise, Newbury Family Counselling Service, Reading Lifelines and Home-Start West Berkshire. Other responses will be anonymised.

#### **3.1 Key results:**

##### **3.1.1 Reduction in or loss of preventative services and longer waiting times**

The main impact on organisations and the services they deliver is a reduction in services, resulting in longer waiting times for people seeking support, advice and information.

The three **Home-Start** organisations in Berkshire West, help families with young children deal with the challenges they face. They support parents as they learn to cope, improve their confidence and build better lives for their children. They all report that they will have longer waiting times. Demands for their services increase as local authority Children's Centres and

Family Workers reduce. Most referrals to Home-Start services come from health visitors, who may now see increased demands on their own workloads.

The Home-Starts report an increase in families accessing support where the mothers have post-natal depression and depression. "These families do not reach the threshold for mental health services and therefore will receive no other support that can support the family as a whole. This service is specifically designed to ensure that mothers create strong attachments to their children which we now know are affected by poor mental health and have an impact on the child's life chances."

Another response stated that "the families we support will not reach their thresholds until their situation is far worse, leading to longer term problems in these families and ultimately a more costly and difficult situation to resolve"

**Reading Mencap** reported that a grant through PDF would have enabled them to continue supporting people with a learning disability to register with their GP and get an annual health check. And to raise awareness amongst health and care agency staff about learning disabilities and how they can make reasonable adjustments to their practices. "People will continue to die early because the health service doesn't understand LD and doesn't work together even when they do commission services." (Many people within the CCG were unaware that Reading Mencap has been funded to support people with LD to get an annual health check in 2017/18).

**Berkshire Youth** supports young people and families around healthy lifestyles and the prevention of obesity and diabetes. "Young people services have taken a hit from all sides and the lack of investment in young people and preventative services has become a serious concern for the future of young people". Berkshire Youth's current programme will stop delivering.

### **3.1.2 Loss of opportunity to develop new, innovative services aligned with CCG priorities**

The Partnership Development Fund encouraged voluntary organisations to develop new ways of working to support people's health and wellbeing, and to help statutory health services to reach out to different communities in Reading.

**Reading Refugee Support Group** applied for funding to provide Mental Health Support to resettled Syrian families and other refugees across Berkshire West, as there is a lack of support for this vulnerable group.

**Dingley's Promise** wanted to create a Health Support Worker post to support the early identification of health issues in children under 5 years with additional needs and disabilities, ensuring they are accessing appropriate health services to prevent unmet health needs and the escalation of issues.

Other organisations wanted to expand their services into new areas of Berkshire West, reach out to minority ethnic groups and support people to use technology to access health

services such as electronic prescriptions, skype consultations and other services/information to support long-term health conditions.

### **3.1.3 Counselling services across Berkshire West are significantly impacted**

**Newbury Family Counselling Service** reported that it may have to close unless it can secure other funding - "Many of our clients fall between the level of need that Talking Therapies provide and the level of need for access to NHS CMHT services. The implication of this is that the parents' poor emotional well being will continue and that in turn will negatively impact on the lives of their children."

**Cruse Bereavement** reported that they may lose their paid coordinator, resulting in around 800 people not being able to access support from specialist bereavement volunteers. In 2017, 63% of referrals to Cruse Bereavement were through GPs, hospitals and Talking Therapies. "Bereavement counselling is not provided through the NHS IAPT services, hence the large number of referrals".

**Reading Lifeline** offers counselling and support for those affected by infertility or baby loss during pregnancy or soon after birth. Lifeline reported that they may need to reduce the service offered to those who have lost a baby and are now pregnant again. Most of the referrals to Reading Lifeline's specialist service are from Talking Therapies (40%) and the bereavement team at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

### **3.1.4 Possible impact on statutory agencies**

**Reading Refugee Support Group** was seeking funding for provide mental health support for resettled Syrian Families and other refugees.

"There is a lack of mental health support in this area which is a ticking timebomb. It will clog up a clogged system" -

**Age UK Reading** was seeking funding to sustain their befriending service.

"Without our support these people will either suffer in silence until their health problems become severe at which point they will need medical help, or they will present to an already overburdened GP or social care system"

Another local befriending service said "It is well researched that the experience of loneliness amongst the elderly can lead to increased medical referrals and other health related issues. Our service has a proven record of alleviating loneliness and isolation for the service users we provide. This helps sustain positive wellbeing and consequently reduces pressure on both health and social care services."

**Cruse Bereavement Care Thames Valley** said "If our Charity were to stop providing this service there would be an additional 800 clients per year within Thames Valley Berkshire Area requiring support. Creating a significant impact on GP surgeries, Talking therapies, IAPT Services, Social Services, hospitals and other Health Care Organisations."

## **4. Voluntary sector support for prevention and self-management**

We are well aware of the financial challenges faced by health and social care partners, and the increasing emphasis on how we can work in partnership to reduce demands on statutory services. Reading's Health and Wellbeing Strategy emphasises the need **to empower people to take charge of their care and support**. *"The Health and Wellbeing Board shares the view that people should feel that they are in the driving seat for all aspects of their and their family's health, wellbeing and care. This applies to people maintaining their wellbeing to prevent ill health, as well those managing a long-term condition to stay well and prevent things from getting worse."*

Many of Reading's voluntary and community organisations contribute to these ambitions by providing groups and activities, peer support, advice and information, health condition-related support and more. It is difficult to measure the impact of individual services which seek to improve wellbeing or prevent decline in health as many factors may contribute. Is it possible to demonstrate a reduction in GP appointments when a person reports they feel more confident and positive after attending a gentle exercise class?

There may be a more obvious link between bereavement counselling and deaths by suicide. In Berkshire in 2012/14, coroners' records identified that 12% deaths by suicide were associated with family bereavement. We would suggest that the specialist counselling service offered by Cruse Bereavement could help to reduce the number of deaths and prevent the significant impact that death by suicide can have on the wellbeing of family and friends.

## **6. Conclusion**

We urge Reading Borough Council and Berkshire West CCG to continuing investing in the preventative services delivered to vulnerable people by voluntary and community organisations, whilst recognising that the financial return on their investment may be difficult to quantify. We will continue supporting voluntary organisations to have robust systems in place to gather evidence, drawing on published research where relevant to demonstrate the impact of their services. We will encourage voluntary organisations to share the stories of, and learn from the experiences of people who use their services to ensure that they receive the most effective services to meet their needs.