

From 'Them and Us' to 'I and We' - Introducing Citizen Directed Support and why we might not get through the next 4 years together without it!

Rick Wilson discusses the arrival of the Wales Alliance for Citizen Directed Support and explores why building person centred services together with the people that use them, their families, friends and the wider community is the only way we will successfully get through the major cuts that face our services.



I was asked to write this article by Llais in July of this year. Had I written it at this time it would have been an article discussing the emerging Alliance focused on building action across Wales towards the creation of self-directed support, or as we in Wales have come to call Citizen Directed Support. It would have been a motivational piece, hopeful and future focused.

Well I missed the deadline! What you have here is more pragmatic and focused on the 'here and now'; it will still be optimistic but a bit tinged with a '2 minutes to midnight' sentiment.

Welcome to the Wales Alliance for Citizen Directed Support

In June of this year the Alliance held its launch event in Newtown Powys, attended by 140 people from over 70 agencies representing; citizens who use services, family members, and staff from commissioner and provider agencies. We have decided to create a collaborative alliance, united around 3 principles:

- **Choice and Control** – this means we should find the right balance of self directed support and user led services so we can support people to live the lives that they choose.

- **Community** – most of us choose to live around people who both need us and are there for us; we cannot live sustainable lives unless we create communities in which we learn how to support each other.
- **Change** – to make the first two principles a reality we will all have to behave very differently. Our paternalistic ways of providing services for people who are passive users will not work. We will need to build support as a collaborative partnership of people and agencies that cannot exist without each other's active involvement. We will need to focus on what people want to achieve, rather than standardised bureaucratic procedures; work together on experiments where we are all in charge; and accept that there is not a 'them and us' but that we are the 'I's who come together to make a 'We' - if you get my drift.

My article back in July would have gone on to explore how these principles are being woven into practice by people across Wales. It would have looked forward to the report from the Independent Commission on Social Services in Wales and invited it, and the Assembly, to embrace bottom up personalisation and join citizens in the creation of truly 'Social' social services in Wales.

I sit here in November with a more urgent sense of timing, so what has changed? The answer to that is the nature of the conversations that I am hearing and that are being relayed to me through my Alliance partners. While there

remains an encouraging commitment to person centred work and relationship centred services from people and agencies across Wales, there appears to be a growing 'but'. That 'but' concerns those huge and pressing cuts that are threatening the services that support people.

There are growing examples of agencies saying that yes we need to work towards Citizen Directed services but unfortunately we need to make cuts first. This article is devoted to why this sentiment is equally understandable and self-defeating.

First I want to argue that person centred services are more efficient, and that truly efficient services are more person centred. Secondly that top down cuts in the short term will destroy the trust necessary to create collaborative and efficient services in the short or longer term.

In making this argument I want to explore 2 examples that are very close to my heart that involve Community Lives Consortium.

Systems thinking and relationship centred working

The Consortium has started working with the systems thinking consultants Vanguard. Vanguard say that they help 'organisations change from command and control to a systems thinking approach to the design and management of work'.

Vanguard have worked successfully with a large number of local authorities and large public service organisations. We are very aware that we will have to deal with significant budget reductions over the next few years and we

really want to create alternatives to our Local Authorities making increasingly difficult cuts to the support that our tenants receive. To have any chance of succeeding we need a lean, efficient approach to our work.

'Check' is the first stage in the Vanguard process. This involves frontline staff and managers in working with service users to establish a clear purpose for the agency. Community Lives Consortium decided that our purpose was to 'support people to live the life they choose'. They then look at the demands (requests) that customers place on the agency and map the flow (stages of work) through which the agency works with people. This flow is looked at to consider which bits of the agency are essential to it achieving its purpose; any that don't contribute to this are seen as waste.

Out of the 14 steps in our flow, only 3 of them offered any value to the people that we serve. The other 11 steps represented bureaucratic processes that we had created because of; commissioner and regulator expectations, or our interpretation, sometimes clumsy interpretation, of their expectations, or in applying a one size fits all fix to every setting. The result of this is that:

- These 11 steps take up 61% of the time of our front-line coordination team. We have a team made up of many excellent leaders of support and they spend much of their time not leading or supporting but administrating.
- The steps often frustrated tenants getting what they want quickly.

We are now in the second 'Plan' stage of Vanguard process. This starts with us re-designing the way we support people starting with our purpose and the 3 steps that have value for tenants. These 3 steps are:

- Exploring how I want to live my life
- Agreeing the support that I need
- Living my life

What is interesting about these 3 steps is that they mirror 3 of the 7 steps of the 'In Control' process. Thus, although starting from a systems thinking perspective, we almost immediately adopt a person centred approach which focuses only on what service users value and generates much less waste.

Dialogue

These three steps are no longer part of a process; they are stages in a conversation or dialogue between the person and a close supporter. This dialogue is unique to the person and does not require the system to be strong, but requires the people in it to have strong relationships and to be highly skilled communicators. These people will need to explore the person's wishes and needs - often where they cannot express them in words - and sometimes have difficult conversations where the person and those around them do not agree on the best way forward.

We are currently about to test this way of working which we believe will be far more effective and it may well have some interesting effects which could include:

- Our current tools and paperwork will become all but useless as conversations become personal and local to the person.

- Our performance management systems will not be able to 'batch' information about large numbers of people.
- The people at the top will not get enough information to be in control thus our management structure will need to flatten. To be 'in charge' will mean being part of the 'relationship' with the person.
- Our very skilled managers will have more capacity to work directly with people, and will make space for them by changing recruitment patterns across the agency.

We recognise that this will not fully achieve the level of changes necessary over the next 4 years but we estimate it will enable us to get through the first year at least, while we explore longer term community development strategies.

What are our system lessons so far?

- We can be radically more efficient - and indeed we have no choice given the cuts that we all face!
- However, this will only be possible if we treat the people we support as active human beings and work with them not through process but through relationships and collaboration.
- If we are to do this then we will need to be workers who are active motivated rounded human beings who do not rely on policy but draw on their own competence and ability to achieve our shared purpose.

We feel that this example shows that efficiency and 'person-centeredness' are closely linked and create the opportunity to achieve significant system wide savings. At the heart of these very

efficient systems are close inclusive relationships based on establishing and developing trust. We can see how fragile these relationships will be to imposed cuts which make certain types of need ineligible without reference to the individual or their supporters. Once damaged this trust will be very hard to re-build. The second example explores how we build stronger communities.

Time Together Gorseinon - building resilient community

Time Together Gorseinon is being developed as part of the Swansea Adult Social Services Transformation process. It aims to bring citizens, professionals, agencies and community groups together to maximise the wellbeing of everybody living in the Gorseinon area. It is made up of two components:

- A Wellbeing Network - This is a network that people who live in Gorseinon can join. Members are invited to share the things that they need or would like to do, as well as the interests and skills they have to offer that can be of help to others. This information is put together so that people can be link up with others who are either looking for similar things or who can help out. People who get involved are thanked or paid with time credits which can be used to access community activities, such as community cinema or local events.
- A Wellbeing Alliance - The Alliance (of which Community Lives Consortium is a founder member) is made up of organisations that provide and commission services as well as community groups. This Alliance

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will support the growing Network and develop the time credits currency, as well as finding better ways to deliver support to people in Gorseinon.

How do we think this will help? This process is in its early stages but we can already recognise how it will make it possible to:

- Get involved and contribute to the community.
- Create locally owned, person centred joined up services for us all.
- Build more resilient mutually supportive communities.
- Construct much more efficient targeted services.

Without collaborative experiments like Time Together we will have no prospect of finding out whether the construction of more supportive communities is possible.

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I have discovered that one of my colleagues is a community

councillor whose daughter is learning how to teach street dance. We are now bringing both of the connections into her work with the people that we support.

We are learning about the people that we serve. Their perceptions of personal care needs are not as fixed as we thought and are influenced by their feelings of belonging and contribution to the people around them.

In summary - sustainability is not survival

The examples presented in this article are local but I believe the lessons that they offer are more general and very timely. I believe the decisions that we make between now and April next year will be crucial in how we manage the cuts and the relationships that make up our support services for the next 5 years. The cuts are inevitable but our behaviour towards them is not.

We have a choice:

- To reach out to each other and the relationships that make up the support we offer each other. This will take huge compromise and a new answer to the question – whose service is it really?

- To step away from each other and make top down decisions which damage relationships in the short term which we will need to draw on in the longer term.

If we choose the former I believe that the growing consensus about person centred practice, relationship centred working and citizen directed support offers us opportunities to create efficiency and re-model our services sustainably within the financial and social resources we have.

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For more information about the Alliance please go to our website on www.wacds.org.uk

