

Making disability supports and services more personal , local and accountable: An international perspective on Local Area Coordination as a new “front end” of the disability system.

Keynote address to National Needs Assessment and Service Coordination Conference held in Christchurch New Zealand, 2nd December 2008

Eddie Bartnik

Outline

- Context in New Zealand
- Some fundamentals underpinning reforms
- Case study of Local Area Coordination in Western Australia
- Interstate and international implementation
- Reflection on progress and challenges

Disability Services Commission

Context

- Social Services Committee Inquiry in NZ and key recommendations regarding a new entry point along the lines of the LAC system, changing role of the NASC system and increasing choice and access to individualised funding
- “Front end” of the system is critical: relationships and expectations
- Local Area Coordination has a track record over 20 years: a clear framework and evidence base, replications interstate and overseas
- Timely to consider strategic opportunities/challenges

i

Some Fundamentals of Designing Effective Supports and Services

- Get to know people well over time, person by person
- Connections to the local community
- Positive values and assumptions about individuals, families and communities with safeguards as needed
- Building capacity versus “providing” services
- Ask the right starting question: “What’s a good life?” versus “What services do people need?”

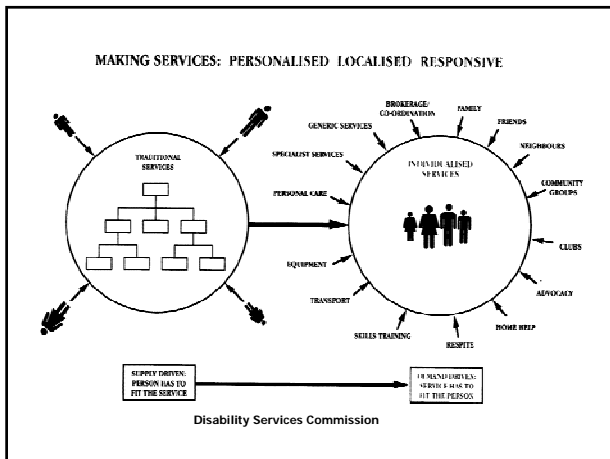
CONTEXT OF WA DISABILITY SERVICES

- Population 2m (10% of nation)
- 1.5m Perth, 0.5m over 2.5m km², 1 consumer: 1,600km²
- Isolation, creativity and innovation
- Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement
- State Government major role, history of separate disability agency (Disability Services Commission)
- Good continuity of key leadership in government over past 20 years, more change in recent years

LOCAL AREA CO-ORDINATION

- Local Area Coordination is a unique West Australian strategy for making disability supports and services more personal, local and accountable
- Established in 1988 in country WA, successive evaluations and expansions have led to statewide coverage across all ages and a wide range of disabilities
- Small number of new positions each year for population growth

Disability Services Commission



LAC Framework

- The DSC vision statement is that “All people live in welcoming communities which facilitate citizenship, friendship, mutual support and a fair go for everyone”
- “Developing a vision for a good life is a personal and individual matter. However, people with disabilities and their families throughout the State have expressed their view that a good life in the local community requires opportunities for valued relationships, security for the future, choices, contribution and challenge”

LAC Framework cont.

- Charter is to “develop partnerships with individuals and families as they build and pursue their goals and dreams for a good life, and with local communities to strengthen their capacity to include people with disabilities as valued citizens”
- Set of 10 principles emphasising citizenship rights and responsibilities, participation and contribution, natural authority, importance of family/friends and personal networks, information to enhance decision making, choice and control over supports, complementary nature of services

Local Area Coordinator Role

- Build and maintain effective working relationships with individuals, families and their communities.
- Provide accurate and timely information. Assist individuals, families and communities to access information through a variety of means.
- Provide individuals and families with support and practical assistance to clarify their goals, strengths and needs.
- Promote self advocacy. Provide advocacy support and access to independent advocacy

LAC Role cont

- Contribute to building inclusive communities through partnership and collaboration with individuals and families, local organisations, and the broader community
- Assist individuals and families to utilise personal and local community networks to develop practical solutions to meet their goals and needs.
- Assist individuals and families to access the supports and services they need to pursue their identified goals and needs.
- Funding is the last strategy: this includes a graduated system of direct funding and then program funding

LAC Snapshot 2008

- Average ratio 1:63 people statewide, range of ages and disabilities in local community
- Over 8250 people supported (ongoing support through transitions) plus 2500 information and advocacy contacts.
- Network of 50 local offices and 145 LACs
- Budget approx \$30m, split between operations and direct funding
- Statewide individualised funding system since 1992, graduated system of funding and “Shared Management Model”
- Administered through metro and country directorates, each has 10-12 divisions/regions

HOW DO WE KNOW IT IS A GOOD APPROACH?

- Regular, independent evaluations (approx 20 studies since 1988 in WA)
- Low bureaucracy and per capita cost
- Small funding packages → strong preventive effect, key part of funding reforms
- National Case Study by Productivity Commission 1998
- Invited UK book chapter 2007 on LAC as a case study in co-production and personalisation of social care

Disability Services Commission

How do we know (cont)

- Implementation by other Australian jurisdictions eg: Queensland, Northern Territory, NSW, ACT
- Strong interest internationally eg: Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and New Zealand. 2007 Scotland national evaluation
- Major WA Ministerial Review of LAC in 2002/03 overarching conclusions..."First, on all measures of consumer outcomes, service coverage and cost effectiveness, the model has proven to be highly successful over an extended period of time... successive surveys, reviews and evaluations...have been independently confirmed to be methodologically sound."
- Increased demands, coverage and accountability requirements, recommendations for improvement/consistency

Disability Services Commission

Safeguarding

Challenge = Preserve Core/Stimulate Progress.

Broad framework:

- Focus on individuals/families/communities, values and principles. Creating the "right relationship."
- Clear job design/standards, clarifying expectations and agreement
- Ratios enable personal approach.
- Selection of LAC's, involving people
- Statewide shared values/ principles, network of human size units

Disability Services Commission

Safeguarding (cont)

- Values focus, induction and training
- Supervision structure, connection, relationships
- Strong care and protection framework, training and partnerships
- Open culture, feedback and evaluation, independent standards monitoring, increasing focus on outcomes.
- Partnerships, leadership and innovation

Disability Services Commission

Reflection

- Radical change, LAC driving force behind transforming a traditional service system to building supports and services around people in their local communities, giving choice and control.
- LAC is the front end, no service coordination layer and focus is on a more personalised community response
- Long term strategy is essential as well as moral leadership and vision for a "good life" and the fundamental importance of family, friends and local community.
- LAC is a foundation of DSC Strategic Plan and new Community Living Plan. Strong links to UK national policy agendas of personalisation and self directed supports, as well as North American Self Determination movement.
- Ongoing challenges with quality and consistency but a solid framework and evidence base plus strong community support