Supporting People services for Older People: Emerging Findings Report

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Aylward Review (2010) of Supporting People recommended the eligibility criteria for older people receiving Supporting People funds should be based on need rather than age or tenure.

This bulletin presents emerging findings from research examining the progress made to date in implementing this recommendation.

Two surveys were conducted, one with Supporting People providers in 2014 and the other with providers and local authorities in 2015. A number of area based case studies were also undertaken in early 2015.

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi
YMCHWIL GYMDEITHASOL Y LLYWODRAETH
GSR
GOVERNMENT SOCIAL RESEARCH
Analysis for Policy

Emerging Findings:

During analysis it became clear that there were variation in how questions were answered, this may be because the data is collected and recorded in different ways by different respondents or because respondents had different understanding of key terms. While the data provides an indication of current services, given these caveats, it cannot be considered to be definitive.

Emerging findings from the 2014 survey:

This survey gathered both quantitative and qualitative information (in the form of open ended questions) from service providers.

Although this survey received responses from just over 60 providers (of a potential 70-80 providers), a small minority were from organisations without housing stock of their own, such as charities and voluntary organisations. These organisations may be more likely to offer tenure neutral services, as they do not have a tenant base.   Due to this potential gap in the data, the findings cannot be considered to be fully representative of the provision of older people's services.

- In relation to the accommodation type, just over half of the service provision (52 per cent) was within sheltered housing schemes and just under a third (31 per cent) within housing allocated to older persons. This indicates a large majority of services were provided to social housing tenants. A small number of services were provided only in 'community' settings, but the absence of information relating to the community-based services overall meant that the level of provision could not be accurately ascertained.

- A majority of the alarm provision (75 per cent) was hardwired, while 23 per cent of provision was in the form of Lifeline alarms. Where hardwired alarms were utilised, respondents indicated that in some cases this was because a continuing need was identified, but various concerns were also raised about the cost of decommissioning hardwired alarms and the reliability / practicality of dispersed alarms.

- Staff in nearly two thirds (64 per cent) of services providing support to particular sites also provided some level of support either in the community or to another site. While this could potentially indicate hub and spoke models[1], the proportion of any support provided in the community could not be ascertained.

- While many respondents indicated they had fully implemented the Aylward recommendation or would do so shortly, in many of these cases services were still provided only to tenants of the provider organisation. These services appeared to have been identified as being in accordance with the Aylward recommendation because support was provided only to those assessed by the service as needing it. Providers were therefore providing needs based services, albeit not on a tenure neutral basis.

- Respondents were asked to state whether services were available according to tenure or need, with tenure defined as 'where the service is accommodation based' and need defined as 'where anyone can access the service irrespective of where they live'. Just over a quarter, (28 per cent) of services provided in sheltered accommodation were identified as being available according to need. This could suggest either that these services were hub and spoke models, however it was also

- possible that a different definition of need had been applied (as outlined in the point above).

- There were around 20 comments indicating that providers were undertaking, planning or had completed reviews of their services, with a small number undertaking or planning pilot projects. Timescales for these (where given) were generally within 2014.

- Steps being taken to implement the Aylward recommendation included: changes to staff roles and / or staff development, introducing needs assessment processes, developing hub and spoke models of support and extending services into the local community. Where timescales for implementation were given, these were generally within 2014, but ranged from February 2014, to 12 months, to five years for full implementation.

- Many respondents indicated they had fully implemented the Aylward recommendation or would do so shortly, although there was limited detail on how this had been achieved. However, in many of these cases services were still provided *only* to tenants of the provider organisation. These services appeared to have been identified as being in accordance with the Aylward recommendation because support was provided only to those assessed as needing it. Although eligibility may be 'needs-based', as the service is inaccessible to individuals other than tenants, it is not tenure-neutral.

- Respondents raised a number of concerns in relation to implementation of the Aylward recommendation. These could be broadly grouped into: legal / contractual issues, business concerns for providers, delivery and practical problems; and issues connected with change. They included difficulties such as legal commitments to tenants (including on stock transfer), costing issues with new models, resistance to change from tenants and staff and the

---

[1] This is a model where a sheltered housing service provides the base for support, with some level of support also available to other individuals in the local community.

need for consultation and gradual implementation.

Findings from the 2015 surveys

The 2015 surveys obtained an update on the information provided in 2014 and more detailed information on the tenure of individuals receiving both accommodation-based and non-accommodation-based services. Local authorities were required to complete one survey and providers asked to complete another. The key findings were:

- Across Wales, the large majority of units of support (74 per cent) were commissioned by local authorities as 'fixed' support (connected to accommodation), with the remainder commissioned as 'floating' support (non-accommodation-based). In some responses the number of floating units included support available only to tenants of the local authority or RSLs.

- When both fixed and floating units were taken into account, local authorities indicated that of the units they commissioned, nearly half (43 per cent) were available only to tenants of RSLs, and 38 per cent were available only to local authorities. In total, 19 percent were identified as being available to anyone regardless of tenure.

- Of the units stated by local authorities to be available to anyone, regardless of tenure, providers indicated that just under a third (31 per cent) were provided to RSL tenants and a similar amount (30 per cent) to local authority tenants, with 11 per cent provided to owner occupiers and individuals in private rented accommodation. In the remaining cases (27 per cent) the provider did not identify the tenure of the recipient.

Interviews

The surveys were complemented by semi-structured interviews of individuals involved in the commissioning and provision of Supporting People funded older person services in three local authority areas in Wales. Analysis is at a formative stage, but early themes emerging are:

- There were benefits to support staff in moving from working on one site (typically sheltered accommodation) to a wider role, including a decrease in isolation, access to team support, development of skills and expertise, and improved professionalism.
- There may be benefits in linking with other support services and providers.
- There is a need to roll out changes sensitively owing to the impact on both service users and staff.

Next steps

This bulletin presents emerging findings from the research so far. The full Final Report will be available in the summer of 2015.