Integration of Health and Social Care

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Ahead of the evidence session on 13\textsuperscript{th} March 2012, SCVO welcomes the opportunity to submit a brief summary on the integration of health and social care.

The health and social care integration agenda is one of the most significant parts of public service reform, with key objectives of delivering better outcomes for people who require health and social care whilst ensuring the more efficient use of resources. This is of particular importance given Scotland’s ageing population and straitened circumstances in public finances.

The role of the third sector

As was spelled out clearly in the Christie Commission’s report, the third sector is central to the success of public service reform both in terms of the public services it can deliver and its ability to provide interventions which keep people out of the formal health and social care system by tackling developing needs before they become crises.

The third sector is also a crucial part of reshaping the emphasis away from a model which sees large institutions delivering services to people en masse to one which encourages and enables independence and hands power to individuals to make decisions about their own lives and care.

Ultimately, while changes to the infrastructure of the health and social care system play an important part in this agenda, developments such as self-directed support, personalisation and asset based approaches will do more to deliver the outcomes sought than changing the way the statutory sector is arranged.

Governance issues

As has been evident in the experience so far with the Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund, the third sector is not yet fully embedded in the governance structures that will be required to make health and social care integration and joint commissioning a successful reality. The third sector is required to be treated as an equal partner by NHS Boards and local authorities within the Change Partnership model but this has not always been the case, and decisions are still being made without the full and substantive input of the third sector.

Part of the challenge in achieving the status of equal partners is in increasing the capacity of the third sector itself, but attitudes and behaviour from some within the statutory sectors remains a significant barrier. It is worth noting though, that the Scottish Government appears to understand the issues
around this area and we would expect that it will continue to press this message to the NHS and local authorities.

Health and Social Care Partnerships

SCVO is broadly supportive of the Scottish Government’s policy direction on health and social care and welcomed the Cabinet Secretary for Health’s announcement in December 2011 of the creation of Health and Social Care Partnerships.

However, we await the full detail of the Scottish Government’s proposals when the consultation is published in the near future before we can take a fully informed view.

One significant question that we look forward to having answered is whether the new Partnerships will have their own discrete budgets; an element SCVO believes is essential if they are to be successful in driving the integration of health and social care.

Conclusion

SCVO believes health and social care integration is an important part of delivering better outcomes for people who require care but that it is only one small part of a much larger picture.

We are broadly supportive of the Scottish Government’s movement on this issue but we cannot comment in detail until we have seen the consultation and draft bill.

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