

# West Midlands Co-Production Network Meeting 28th June, 2012

---

## Co-production in Local Government: challenges and opportunities



Welcome and introduction of the participants for the 5<sup>th</sup> West Midlands Co-Production Network event, facilitated by Clare Wightman of Grapevine. Clare explained that Grapevine builds and negotiates relationships between the individual and professionals, mainstream organisations, local communities and neighbours in Coventry.

Clare thanked Marc Carter from INSIGHT for Carers for hosting the meeting at the newly opened INSIGHT House in Dudley.

## INSIGHT for Carers - Marc Carter



Marc Carter, founder of INSIGHT for Carers based in Dudley, began by telling participants that he is a carer for his two children which made him well aware of the support needs that all carers require. Marc was inspired to set up INSIGHT because he felt there was insufficient information and support for carers coming from the local authority, and when he challenged one council officer the response was 'if you think you can do better, do it yourself!'. So he decided to.

In July 2010, with support from key actors in the community, Marc found a cafe space at the local church that he could rent in order to provide services for carers. At the cafe, Marc could provide a warm and open space for people to meet, discuss their issues with other carers and receive help. To help with the running of the cafe Marc offered volunteer opportunities to people with learning or physical disabilities, mental ill health, and the unemployed.

Marc accessed funding from Dudley PCT to provide training such as the Looking After Me course that develops carers' self management skills to ensure that they look after their own health and

wellbeing. Further funding was leveraged from the local area committee and Dudley's Adult Social Care Team. This funding allowed Marc and his team to develop the space so that they could provide the following services: coffee mornings; carers surgeries; support groups; information sessions; advocacy; befriending; and training. As a result the centre became a meeting point for carers in Dudley, helping them to create a social network, and prevent isolation.

In late 2011, Marc met the new head of Adult Social Care to talk about his vision for Insight and how he could work with the council. Due to his awareness that budgets are extremely tight he told her that he didn't want her money. Instead he asked that her team would give their time and expertise, and fallow resources when they closed centres. As a result Marc has been able to receive a great deal of advice and help e.g. he was able to take on kitchen equipment for the move to the new premises for free.

Despite this success, Marc felt that the location of the centre wasn't ideal and that he could get even more people to utilise the services if he moved to a larger and more centrally located space. Marc found a large building, at the centre of Dudley just off the high street and next to the local supermarket, that he was able to lease. The team then moved into a new Insight House in February 2012, and renovated the space until it was opened on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June. The new Insight House allows it to accommodate a larger number of carers, and provide a greater quantity and quality of service.

Marc's message involved the importance of visionary leadership and political support in developing new co-production initiatives.

[Click here to view the INSIGHT for Carers website.](#)

## **Making Health and Social Care Personal and Local: Moving from Mass Production to Co-Production Publication – Laura Wilkes, LGiU**



Laura Wilkes, Policy officer at the *Local Government Information Unit (LGiU)*, talked to participants about the recent *Governance International* and *LGiU* publication on Co-Production in Health and Social Care. The publication includes 24 chapters from major national and international practitioners and thinkers in the field, setting a vision for co-production in health and social care – what it is, why it is a necessity and how to do it. The chapters provide numerous good practice examples of how public services can collaborate with services users and communities to improve outcomes; and discusses the challenges and opportunities that co-production presents.

Laura highlighted the following opportunities that local authorities could take advantage of to co-produce further:

- New powers and opportunities available to local government from the **Localism agenda** will enable a renewed push for co-production.
- Laura highlighted that, **councillors**, as the direct link between the local authority and community, are ideally placed to coordinate and facilitate opportunities for their communities to become more involved in co-production of services.
- **Making participation opportunities easy** for citizens to make use of. There's no point making an offer to citizens to get involved but then offering it at awkward times or places. As well as organising opportunities appropriately, it is crucial to make the opportunity something that communities want to get involved in engaging in genuine dialogue. Local government should let the community know what possibilities are available to them. Equally, local government need to be open to suggestions presented to them.

[Click here to download the publication.](#)

## Towards a Co-production Vision for Leicestershire - Simon McIntosh

Simon McIntosh, Programme Manager of locality commissioning and engagement at *Leicestershire County Council (LCC)* started his presentation by saying that the council cannot yet really claim to have a vision for the whole organisation. However, he said he would talk about the context the council finds itself in, opportunities to promote co-production, and the steps being taken at the moment.

Simon outlined that LCC has had settled leadership due to it having a long-time Conservative administration. It has excellent services with a four star rating, and won the Council of the Year award in 2009. Also, of strategic importance was its early integration of public health.

Despite this, Simon highlighted that winds of change were blowing that the council is having to adapt to. They included reducing budgets that requires £90 million of savings over four years and that budget cuts are going to get tougher in the next year. The need to make savings are compounded by growing demands on services by an ageing population. Another factor that has been changing the operations of the council has been the early adoption of the academy programme by schools in Leicestershire. Already 60% of schools have opted out of the council's control which has had a knock-on effect on corporate services, including the slimming down of the Children and Young People Department

These factors meant that the council is in the process of setting a new direction to develop new ways of working, but that this is a piecemeal approach – one limiting factor being that 2013 is a local election year so a more defined vision will emerge following May 2013. Also, Simon said that as budgetary cuts have not yet begun to bite to their fullest extent in Leicestershire, the implications that require changes towards more collaborative models have yet to dawn. Simon discussed several of the aspects that had begun to emerge. Firstly, there has been a shift to 'demand management' – reducing demand for the costliest services, and increasing uptake of low-cost services regarded to be most beneficial in improving outcomes.

Simon discussed his views on the future role for councils. At Leicestershire he could identify three different roles: service provider; commissioners; and market shaper. He foresaw the role of LCC and other councils moving from a service provision role, to a commissioning role, which could evolve into a market shaping role to embrace co-production. Simon explained that this 'market shaper' role may consist of: supporting market development; providing information, advice and guidance to providers and citizens; taking on the role of consumer champion; and stimulating co-production.

Simon concluded by saying that the current financial imperative should be used as an opportunity. That we need to influence political thinking in local authorities, sell co-production outcomes as solutions, and showcase what can be achieved.