

Local Area Coordination in York: The story so far

Local Area Coordination is an approach emphasising the assets of people and communities. Local Area Coordinators 'walk alongside' individuals as they pursue their vision for a good life, and lessen the need for formal service interventions.

Local Area Coordinators support people to:

- Seek practical, non-service solutions;
- Access, navigate, coordinate and control services;
- Identify support and information;
- Build and maintain valued, mutually supportive relationships;
- Understand and nurture their gifts, skills, experiences and needs;
- Be part of community life;
- Be heard.

What is new about Local Area Coordination?

- The sole 'eligibility' condition is that the individual lives in the area;
- Local Area Coordinators do not directly provide services;
- A new language of 'introductions' and 'connections' rather than referral;
- Whole-person, whole-family approach to building family and social connections and relationships;
- Local Area Coordination support is not time limited;
- Local Area Coordination seeks to build resilience.

The City of York introduced three Local Area Coordinators during Summer 2017 within three wards. To support the early phases of development and to assess the difference made by the approach, a team at the University of York conducted a small-scale process and early outcomes evaluation.

We collected information to assess implementation (including recruitment and management), delivery and emerging outcomes at levels of individual, community and system.

We collected:

- Performance data
- Programme materials
- Information from meetings and events
- Interview data with:
 - Local Area Coordinators;
 - Programme Management;
 - Community organisations and professional stakeholders;
 - Those supported by Local Area Coordination.

What we learnt #1: Active ingredients for implementation and delivery



Trust, honesty, credibility and integrity



Support and trust of leadership and management



Fit with wider system reform (e.g. asset-based)



Long-term approach



Performance data



Communication



Community involvement in recruitment



A team with appropriate professional backgrounds



Being visible and easy to access

What we learnt #2:

Local Area Coordination in action

Coordinators undertake a range of activities:

- Drop ins, lunches and coffee mornings
 - Support for appointments/visits
 - Companionship for isolated and vulnerable people
 - Navigating financial systems
 - Navigating housing, health and social care
 - Advocacy
 - Signposting to leisure activities
- ✓ Local Area Coordinators work true to the LAC aims and approach and it is operating as intended.
 - ✓ Community residents and stakeholders welcome the long-term focus of Local Area Coordinator work.
 - ✓ Real change has been achieved as a result of Local Area Coordinator support.

“My experience of the Coordinators is that they’re able to catch the people as they’re falling, before they’ve hit the bottom, whereas a lot of other support agencies the people have hit the bottom and been there for a while before support is available, because there isn’t the support there.” (Community Stakeholder)

“I would say, ‘She’s somebody who’s in touch with lots of different services across our area, so that can be mental health. It can be childcare. It can be mobility. It can be work. She’s just somebody who has access to this big network.’ It’s somebody who can help you through it and be a supportive person to help you navigate it.” (Local Resident)

“There is a lot of lonely people. I was one of them. People don’t realise that... Well, yes, I often think that if [LAC] hadn’t materialised, I just don’t know where I’d be. I think I’d be very, very poorly.” (Local Resident)

Where next?

Further engagement: there are opportunities to improve engagement with isolated older people, sheltered accommodation, GP settings and some school inclusion teams.

Community impacts: Capturing community level evidence, including how activities build social capital, is a priority.

System impacts: There is a need to better understand wider system changes, including within statutory and community settings.

Prevention and deferral: Exploring caseloads and identifying measurable activities could allow preventative and deferred cost scenarios to be modelled.

But keeping people at the centre: Individuals and families must continue to provide stories and reflections on how Local Area Coordination has supported them in achieving their vision of a good life.

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