Dimensions - Coproduction with families

Co-production with families

Dimensions is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support services for people with learning disabilities. They offer a range of services to young people and adults of all ages, including those with complex needs or challenging behaviour. Dimensions aim is to be connected, keep families involved and keep it personal for the children and young people we support.

The intended outcome was that a group three ladies got to move out of their families homes and live in their own home. Specifically in partnership with families we developed a service that shifted resource towards Support staff in terms of higher wages and discussed in stark terms the cost of 'Management' and how the natural support that existed could be used to help 'Manage' the service. The intention was to make a 24-hour service viable financially for all parties and a negotiated level of formal Management. In this case 100 hours per annum.

The measure for the service was the delivery of a service that only costs what the ladies have in their individual budgets, it has motivated staff to 'self manage' for long periods and that enabled families to relax and play an active role in the provision of the service - and for the ladies to enjoy living in their own home.

To make this service a reality the staff had to be recruited on the understanding that they would 'self manage', and that Dimensions the organisation would have to alter some of its systems and protocols. They only had the use 100 hours a week to manage a service that would traditionally take between 1200 and 2000 hours a year to manage. All the Dimensions departments
were involved in creating the solution to the 'problem' of lower awards from local authorities and how the 5 'self managing' support workers would interface with Dimensions. This particularly involved colleagues from IT and Finance departments.

Dimensions presented the options for how the ladies could potentially spend their budgets and explained the pros and cons for each of the options. They chose the option that eventually became the specification for the service.

The local Care Managers were part of the initial discussions and have played an active role throughout the 14 months that the service has been running—clearly they were pleased that such a creative solution could be found for such a 'small' sum of money. As previously mentioned the service Dimensions were originally quoting for was some £30,000 more expensive.

The primary outcome was in developing a service that enabled the three ladies to achieve their ambition of having their own home; however the transferable benefit that would make a significant improvement for both individuals and Commissioning bodies is the significant cost saving benefit.

The project is sustainable if there is:

- Highly suitable accommodation.
- True Partnerships with families, local authorities and staff teams.
- Open dialogue with all parties.

The costs have been analyzed in that the service has been delivered for over a year and 13 months of management accounts exist to support the view that the service has been delivered to cost.

The service has not overused its 100 hours of Manager time.

Anecdotally two of the three ladies have hugely benefitted from the service and one lady has done
less well but would still remark that she "likes her house and the people she lives with".

The ladies have been 'reviewed' by the local authority as in any other service and again two reviews have been very positive and one more mixed but overall supportive of the service.

Due to the very tight constraints of this service we have stuck very tightly to the Management time at the service. The Support staff have received standard training and the Dimensions charged its standard overheads to the costing so there is no significant resource implications distinct from any other service.

For further information see the Dimensions website:
www.dimensions-uk.org