United Response: support contract

Innovative practice around Personalisation:

England and Wales: United Response

Project: Support Contract

United Response is a charity that provides a range of services for people across England and Wales, including 24-hour support; outreach support or work with people to be in control of the support they choose. We provide a range of services for people with learning disabilities, mental health needs or physical disabilities.

The services we provide depend on each person we work with. We can job coach someone into work. We can provide outreach support and develop community based approaches to supporting vulnerable people to participate in their communities.

The project that we are developing is an easy-to-understand and practical support contract for use by individual purchasers or their carers. We used our experience of using a support contract with direct payment users in the past and the limitations of this contract to develop an improved model contract that would be closely linked to the requirements of purchasers.

The primary advantage of our new approach is that whilst all future contracts will be based on a template, each specific contract is co-produced, as it is developed with purchasers and their representatives to reflect the specific circumstances around the person's support, requirements and expectations. By its very nature,
the new contract template will be more suited to the individual and specific needs of each purchaser.

United Response wanted to develop relationships between themselves and the purchaser. For example, they wanted the contract development process to encourage the discussion and agreeing of expectations on both sides, in part to reduce the likelihood of disputes costing time and resources at a later date, in addition to damaging their relationship.

We wanted each contract to reflect the specific circumstances of the purchaser and the support service being purchaser.

Measurement is harder to demonstrate because each contract is different. However, anecdotally, purchasers have valued the chance to discuss a range of issues and have these discussions reflected in the contract. We will be monitoring the impact of this approach as we move forward.

- Developing the contract model, based on the idea of a co-produced contract, following discussions with families and colleagues about their experience and future requirements.
- Taking legal advice about the enforceability of the contract model.
- Developing guidance for colleagues about how the model works and how negotiations should be conducted with purchasers.

Anecdotally, the people we have tested this new approach with have very much appreciated the time and effort spent to talk about the practical issues surrounding the delivery of support and to have these enshrined in the contract. This is a new experience for many of these people after all.

It does take time to develop a contract this way but the hope is that this preparation will save time later on, with relationships and disputes.

The project took a number of hours to write and
consult on - a minimum of 20 hours. We also had to pay for legal advice.

For more information on United Response:

http://www.unitedresponse.org.uk/.