



ESRC Third Sector Placement Fellowship

Individual budgets and personalisation: understanding the opportunities and challenges facing local third sector infrastructure organisations

Introduction

The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University and a network of four South Yorkshire local infrastructure organisations¹ have been awarded funding under the ESRC Third Sector Placement Fellowship scheme to carry out research to explore how third sector infrastructure organisations can support their members to meet the challenges posed by individual budgets and personalisation in the adult social care policy arena.

Individual Budgets and Personalisation

The project has been developed in response to concerns about the impact individual budgets and personalisation will have on third sector service providers and how third sector infrastructure organisations should respond to this. Individual budgets are a central feature of the government's 'personalisation' agenda and part of its wider plans to modernise social care. Central to this is a commitment to more personalised services that are tailored to the specific needs of individuals, and to give service users more control over the treatment they receive. As significant providers of social care services, third sector organisations will be profoundly affected by these developments as services which have previously been funded under contract or through grants with local statutory bodies will increasingly become 'purchased' by clients using individual budgets. This represents a fundamental shift in the way most third sector organisations work but the full impact of individual budgets on third sector providers has not been fully researched.

Previous research has touched on barriers and challenges to providers but has rarely considered the impact on the third sector directly and the role of local infrastructure organisations has not been addressed. Local infrastructure organisations play a vital role in supporting third sector service providers at a local level and will need to support third sector care providers to adapt and respond as policies are implemented at a local level. Existing evidence suggests third sector infrastructure organisations will need to support their members by providing advice and support in areas such as administration, finance, marketing and communications, and by identifying and publicising good and innovative practice. Additional anecdotal evidence from local practitioners and commissioners indicates that infrastructure bodies will need to play a strategic role in supporting organisations to engage with and influence local statutory bodies developing personalisation policies. However, as there has not been any research focussing on the particular role of and implications for local infrastructure as a result of individualised budgets and personalisation the evidence base is underdeveloped.

¹ The local infrastructure partners are Voluntary Action Rotherham (lead partner), Voluntary Action Sheffield, Voluntary Action Barnsley and Doncaster Council of Voluntary Service.

The Fellowship

The Fellowship will run from February to May 2010 during which time a number of key research tasks will be carried out. This includes a review of policy and research material linked to the personalisation agenda and research interviews with local infrastructure organisations and frontline third sector organisations getting to grips with personalisation in their area.

The Fellowship will provide analysis of policy and research material on the personalisation agenda, using existing evidence to draw out any learning points and implications for third sector service providers; present analysis and findings from the research fieldwork; and outline a series of recommendations for third sector infrastructure organisations on how they might support their members to respond to the personalisation agenda.

How to Get Involved

We are looking for a mixture of local infrastructure and front line third sector organisations to participate in the research – we'd be particularly eager to hear from anyone working in the individual budgets pilot areas. Research participants will be asked to spend about an hour with a researcher talking through their experiences of personalisation and the role that local infrastructure organisations can play as the agenda develops (this can be face-to-face or over the phone).

Contact

For further information about the Fellowship, and to express an interest in participating in the research please contact:

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