

Equalities Participation Network – 25 January 2024

Present: Myshele Haywood (GREC), Shola Ajide (Fountain of Love Church), Ru Carroll (Four Pillars), Vivian Draghici (Mamacita Foundation), Roslynn Fowler (Aberdeen Action on Disability), Carol Hannaford (ACC Sheltered Housing), Linzi Harrow (ACC), James Holmes (Four Pillars), Ells Mchaffie (Guide Dogs), Grace Milne (ACHSCP), Mary Rasmussen (Guide Dogs). Apologies: Fay Morrison, Hussein Patwa, John Whitfield.

Mamacita Foundation: As it was her first EPN meeting, Vivian briefly explained her organisation – they support integration, inclusion and wellbeing of immigrants in Aberdeen, and they look to indigenous Scottish people to enhance integration – they help both immigrants and locals reach out to each other to form connections and understanding. They also run a food bank and a range of groups and projects.

Speaker: Grace Milne, Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP)

Grace spoke about some of the projects she works on, including:

- Unpaid Carers Strategy Group – looking at ways to support people who provide unpaid care for family members who are ill or disabled.
- Diversity Officer Network – a voluntary group of Health & Social Care staff who review Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs).
- What are Integrated Impact Assessments? For any proposed changes to policy within the Partnership, IIAs are carried out to comply with equality laws. This includes considering how the changes will affect people with protected characteristics (age, disability, ethnicity, sex/gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation, transgender identity), the Fairer Scotland duty (socioeconomic disadvantage), the Armed Forces Covenant, and human rights laws.
- If there are likely to be negative impacts on specific groups, this must be highlighted with an explanation of how these will be mitigated, or why the impacts are unavoidable and how they will be communicated with patients and service users.
- IIAs are written by the departments proposing changes, and reviewed by Diversity Officers to ensure they are complete and consistent. They also check on follow-up, to ensure mitigations are being carried out, etc.
- Diversity Officers also look for training opportunities and resources to improve their understanding of the issues facing different communities.

Questions

When IIAs are carried out, are changes made after highlighting negative impacts?

Grace explained that IIAs must duly consider the potential impacts on specific groups, and a range of different perspectives are taken into account, including patient and service user feedback.

Sometimes mitigations are not possible (e.g. due to budget constraints), so the Partnership may try to find other ways to help, for example through working with other organisations, or through being transparent about the changes.

What is the aim of integrating healthcare and social care? How does it work, and what are the benefits?

Grace explained that around 2015, the Scottish government brought together services provided by local councils and the NHS to create a more integrated system that is better able to meet people's needs. The Health and Social Care Partnership includes:

- Adult social care – provided by Aberdeen City Council – including care at home services to help people with day-to-day tasks so they can live independently with illness or disability; supporting unpaid carers; and organising care homes where necessary.
- NHS primary care including community health teams, district nurses, allied health professionals (e.g. physiotherapists, dentists, technicians, psychologists, etc), vaccination services, and GPs (though GPs are independent contractors).

There have been a lot of initiatives over the years – how do these services come together when there's no money?

Grace agreed that funding is a constant challenge, but said that collaboration can help with finding creative solutions to problems.

How do you deal with the practical challenges of IIAs? How is data collected? What do you do about consultation fatigue?

Grace agreed that everyone is trying to get feedback on everything all the time. The HSCP works with other bodies to get information, trying to use what's already there – including Community Planning Partnerships, Priority Neighbourhood Participation Groups (professionals working in these areas), Locality Empowerment Groups (residents). They also speak to the Carer Reference Group (a peer support group) about any proposed changes, to get their feedback and ideas.

Discussion on getting involved – there are links between Local Empowerment Groups and Community Councils in some areas, but not all. Information about getting involved is currently available on Facebook and Twitter, but lots of people don't use those platforms.

Grace asked the group: is there anything specific from the HSCP that you would like to see?

- For example, signposting – 'AGILE' was mentioned – Aberdeen Guide to Independent Living and Enablement – available here: aberdeencityhscp.scot/our-delivery/agile
- Roslynn noted it's good to get together to discuss and connect, helps to prevent people falling through the cracks, helps everyone know what's going on.
- Mary noted that links between social lives, social care and health are not always obvious – for example Guide Dogs have been promoting information about the new ban on pavement parking, because many people don't know about it, or don't understand why it's important (cars on pavements are a major hazard for people with visual impairments and

mobility issues, and also families with children, prams, etc). It's currently not being enforced in Aberdeen but should be later this year.

- Ru and Roslynn raised concern about a lack of funding causing organisations to close, most recently Autism Understanding Scotland. When this happens, who will pick up the slack? The need doesn't disappear just because funding is gone. They likened the situation to a time bomb.
- Mary wondered whether it might be helpful for groups to get together and share resources, because everyone is struggling to pay for heat and electricity, let alone delivering services and helping people.
- Grace mentioned **Priority Intervention Hubs**, including the Vaccination Centre in the Bon Accord Centre, and other wellbeing hubs. The HSCP is keen to make its spaces available to community organisations that need space. People at a recent ACVO meeting were discussing something similar.
- At the Vaccination Centre, 20-30 different organisations per month come in to speak to people and host workshops. **Free tea and coffee is also available.**
- Mary noted that communication needs to be better, her neighbours and many other people would benefit from what's happening at the Vaccination Centre, but they don't know about it. Most of the EPN people also didn't know about it.

Actions: Grace to send Myshele details about what's on at the Vaccination Centre, and information about the Local Empowerment Groups. Myshele to share with the group.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 29 February, 4:00-5:00pm

Topic: TBC