

Health and social care integration in Scotland

Alison Docherty, Isla Bisset

Alison Docherty is Joint Improvement Team Action Group Lead for Equipment and Adaptations and Isla Bisset is Policy Officer in Integration & Reshaping Care, Health Department, Scottish Government, Edinburgh EH1 3DG

At the beginning of April 2014, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. This puts in place a framework to make sure that health and social care services are planned, resourced and delivered together by health boards and local authorities, to improve outcomes for people using services, their carers and families.

The new law applies to adult health and social care services – health boards and local authorities can also include children’s services, criminal justice, housing and other functions in their integrated arrangements if they agree to do so locally. The legislation, which comes into effect from April 2015, includes a strong role for the third and independent sectors, clinicians, social workers, other professionals, and local communities.

The Act sets out the legislative framework for integrating health and social care. Health boards and local authorities will establish integrated partnership arrangements, called integration authorities, which will replace community health partnerships, and will deliver national outcomes for health and wellbeing.

Integration authorities will set up locality arrangements, which will provide a forum for local professional leadership of service planning. The Act places a heavy emphasis on the importance of effective joint strategic planning of service provision underpinned by a good, shared understanding of the population’s needs, and informed by professional and local community input.

During 2014, the regulations to support the integration of health and social care were consulted upon before being laid in the Scottish Parliament. These come into effect in December 2014. The regulations set out the detailed arrangements for integration, including the outcomes that the new integration authorities must deliver.

Implementation phase

Health boards and local authorities are now setting up shadow integrated arrangements before the legislation comes into force. The next major milestone for health boards and local authorities is to submit an integration scheme to ministers for approval – the integration scheme sets out local plans for integration, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Act



Health and Social Care Integration

Supporting people to live well and independently at home or in a homely setting in their community for as long as possible

There’s no ward like home



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and must be submitted by 1 April 2015. Integrated arrangements must be implemented during 2015, with integration authorities fully functioning by 1 April 2016.

Working together to achieve better outcomes for people

Integration is all about working together to achieve better outcomes for people who need health and social support, enabling them to live not just longer, but better, lives. This is a vision of better care where people can expect, for themselves and those they care for, to be listened to; to be involved not just in deciding upon the care they receive, but to be an active participant in how it is delivered; and to enjoy better health and wellbeing within their homes and communities as a result.

What individuals expect are services that work in a coordinated way with them, to understand what matters most in their lives, and to build support around achieving the outcomes that are important to them. Many of those outcomes will involve keeping them safe, physically and mentally well – out of hospital, in their homes and local communities, in the best possible health; but as important will be that the coordinated support people receive also enables them to live their lives the way they would like to live them, including in relation to their housing, mobility and social needs.

Through providing help and support to individuals, their carers and families better to manage their conditions on a day-to-day basis, formalising networks within the community, and working with individuals as true partners, rather than just as patients or people who use services, the new legislation brings significant opportunities to help people to live well and for longer at home or in a homely setting.

Integration and equipment and adaptations

The Joint Improvement Team is supporting partnerships to deliver effective integrated service models. In terms of community equipment services, ongoing review across most partnerships in Scotland is now being given added impetus by the inclusion of this aspect of service provision in the proposed integrated responsibilities. With the focus on seamless pathways and better strategic planning, this offers a real opportunity for equipment provision to be recognised as a significant contribution to meeting the wider service objectives of sustaining people in a safe and healthy way in their own communities.

More recently work has been implemented to develop and test proposals around improving the provision of adaptations. In setting up an Adaptations Working Group, the Scottish Government has recognised the importance of effective support for adaptations, in order to plan for and respond to our ageing population. The group has also considered others who use adaptations services – these include an increasing number of disabled people, and people with long-term health conditions.

The group was unanimous that the person and his/her carer(s) should be placed at the centre of service provision and should be in control. Current policy, legislation and funding systems are complex and have not been developed from this principle. For professionals and service users trying to navigate the maze, too often this complexity, and the systems designed to manage it, hinder the very purpose of adaptations: timely work to enable and sustain independent living, maintain and improve quality of life, and prevent the need for more costly interventions.

Demonstration sites

Five Adapting for Change demonstration sites have now been identified across Scotland in Fife, Lochaber, Falkirk, Borders and Aberdeen. The aim of the demonstration site is to develop and test key aspects of the approach recommended by the Adaptations Working Group to inform a revision of the national policy framework for housing adaptations, and to provide learning and innovative practice.

The Adaptations Working Group identified a set of principles to inform the approaches and proposals in the demonstration sites:

- Person centred
- Prevention focus
- Enablement focus.

In addition the Adaptations Working Group has identified a wide range of areas where improvement is needed:

- Greater focus on prevention
- Adaptations for people living with dementia
- Adaptations as one response in an integrated menu of options to secure suitable housing which is fit for purpose.

This work is bringing housing, social care, NHS and third sector agencies together to challenge current systems and provide innovative effective solutions in line with the wider integration agenda.

