

Shared Lives and Personal Budgets

Summary notes of Presentations

Co-workers and families have had two presentations regarding the above. These were envisaged by the Mediation Agreement.

Shared Lives Plus

On 31st July 2015 the CEO, Alex Fox spoke in Honey Bee Nest Hall. A number of people told Alex about life in Botton, and what they held dear.

Shared Lives is also known as Adult Placement and may be likened to fostering of a learning disabled adult. We were told that it has been in operation since the 1970s and currently serves around 12,000 people via around 5,000 carers operating through 153 schemes in the UK. There are co-ordinators to manage around 25 arrangements each.

“Most of us don’t dream of living alone.”

Shared Lives Plus (SLP) have negotiated a framework around family lives with CQC. Carers are paid, but not by the hour. The *usual* process for matching adults with carer families can take between 3 and 6 months, “matching can take time but pays dividends in exceptionally stable relationships and added value”.

Carers can be folk who have children of their own at home, and Alex recognised that “lots of people really thrive in an environment where there are children.”

The SLP model generally has a limit of three learning-disabled adults per household, and this accords with CQC Guidance. Alex said that, off the top of his head, given that existing Botton household arrangements had already been chosen by villagers, it’s not usually good to be telling people who have made a choice what they can and can’t do. Accordingly there *might* be a possibility of increasing the household limit to 4 villagers. It would not be necessary to go through a matching process for people who already feel “matched”, subject to scrutiny of the situation by an independent advocate. Approval of a house co-ordinator would, however, not be automatic.

The role of carer is largely unsupervised, and there is said not to be too much paperwork. The ethos is that the arrangement should feel like ordinary family life.

As far as work is concerned, he said that there is not often sheltered employment, but he could see no reason why that should not be possible, and was quite excited by the idea.

Payment comes from three sources:

- A licence fee for occupation-generally from housing benefit
- Payment for board and utilities (from benefits), typically £40 pw.
- Payment for care from the scheme, banded according to need, with a range from £150 to £450, and an average payment of £240 pw

For a Scheme to start in Botton there would need to be agreement by CVT, or for the Co-workers to have security of tenure. Payment could also be made by use of Personal Budget.

In answer to a question, Alex said that a few years ago they may have “been edgy” about intentional communities, but that now there are no hard and fast rules, and he said that having been around the village, he found what he had seen to be “really moving”, and even though meals took place around a large table, that “felt good”, and he also felt that “there should be potential for a fit”. He spoke of having a pragmatic approach and recognised that the model of Shared Lives evolves. He was protective of it, saying that it was fragile, but noted that the matters that he would feel protective about, were matters which the audience found valuable, too.

Further information on the organisation can be obtained from its website : www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk

Personal Budgets

On 10th September 2015 we also had a presentation from Caroline Tomlinson, who has been coming into the village regularly around two days per week to consider ways forward for the Village at the request of CVT.

She spoke of her background as the mother of a disabled son, and of her struggle to get the provision that was actually right for him, rather than simply what was on offer. Thanks to her initiative her son was the first individual to get a personal budget. Together with Simon Duffy she subsequently founded In Control, an organisation to promote the use of personal budgets.

She stated that “most people with a support need end up living with someone they haven’t *chosen* to live with.”

She said that councils focus on outcomes. She told us that there is a new power-shift in favour of the individual, and to make them work for different people, their needs and circumstances, personal budgets can be administered in a variety of ways.

She explained:

- Direct Payments were popular for people with physical disabilities.
- Or payments could be made to representatives.

- Or to Independent Living Trusts (very few)
- Or to Community Organisations who hold people's money
- Or to an Individual Service Fund, where a Council gives it to a provider-to be used in accordance with a Personal Plan for the benefit of an individual
- Or it is managed by the Council-as appears to be the case for most within CVT.

She spoke of the need for continuity of relationships and recognised the benefits arising from this. She spoke of positive activity and positive, meaningful occupation, and explained how, in her situation, she had sought to employ people "with big hearts", commitment and "stickability". She also recognised the benefit of contact with young children. Two threads running through her personal story were of the benefits of relationships and continuity of care.

She told us that NYCC have not been pro-active about personalisation.

She favoured approaches where people with need identified what the solution to their need looked like, and then presented that solution to the local authority, and favoured a multi-faceted approach to situations.

She spoke with great enthusiasm about Botton, saying "it has a wow factor which needs promoting", but she noted that the current conflict would not help with new placements here. She thought one might look at each house individually, and consider how it might best be dealt with, concluding "The world is waiting for you!"

Conclusion

There is an enthusiasm to explore the potential for a Shared Lives scheme within Botton Village, and further enquiries are being made and progressed.

Andrew Faulkes, 25 September 2015