

Chairperson's Report 2018

Adopting the Making it Real concepts over the last 5 years has been a challenge for everybody involved. Shropshire Council Adult Services have been generous in their support over the years for MiR, even under some pretty fierce criticism from myself, an Expert by Experience, of the way things were being done... or not being done. In the early days, we just had the 'I' Statements to guide us, we tried to develop ways of using those statements to measure the effectiveness of the ASC system which was in place when we embarked on the Making it Real odyssey.



I believe that the greatest challenge was, and still is, to find out what is happening on the front line of Adult Social Care. Sometimes, there is a disparity between the service which Shropshire Council *think* they are providing and what the people who use services, and their carers are experiencing. We came to the conclusion early-on that the only way to find out about people's experiences as recipients of ASC would be to invite them to participate in Advisory Groups. The concept of using Advisory Groups was enshrined in the People2People governing documents but sadly, was never really fully adopted.

Stewart's hard work, along with a considerable number of dedicated Experts by Experience, has paid off. Today we have 3 Advisory groups around the county who meet regularly and who provide valuable information about their experiences, unavailable elsewhere. Participants of these groups need to feel that their input is valued, considered and adopted wherever possible. Efforts are made to make sure that their comments are recorded and passed on to the Making it Real board and that the outcome is published.

It is my aim to ensure that Experts by Experience are involved in the design and shaping of ASC **as a matter of course** and that their involvement with Shropshire Council is translated into action which encourages people to live their lives to the full.

Our dogged adherence to the MiR concept is paying off. As TLAP prepare to launch an updated version of MiR (which reflects changes brought about by the Care Act), Stewart and I have been invited to attend the opening event in London, to relay our experiences of 5 years of interesting work. In attendance will be the Minister for Care and many other influential people.

The new MiR framework has some important changes which will, I hope, bring about some significant changes in the way that Shropshire Council thinks about ASC. The main difference with the new MiR, will be the addition of 'We' statements, which will sit alongside the 'I' statements and bolster their effect. By adopting these new 'We' statements, Shropshire Council ASC will be agreeing to some very strong and astute statements, clearly laid out for all to see. The TLAP consultation document has 49 "We" statements and they are sobering in their clarity and implication, here are two good examples from the 49:

"We provide accurate and up-to-date information in all formats that we tailor to individual needs, face-to-face if necessary"

“We work with others to agree a single, integrated personal plan and provide a named coordinator for people accessing more than one service”

Adopting the new MiR model will be a major step forward towards the objective that we all share of making personalisation a reality. Shropshire Council’s open commitment MiR, will empower people to become more ‘savvy’ about their care.

Over the years we have had some notable successes and a few failures. Without dwelling too long on the failures, here are a couple that still rankle. I am disappointed by the dwindling attendance at MiR board meetings, couple that with a feeling I get sometimes that conversations had in the board room are forgotten as members leave, and occasionally I sense ambivalence. Perhaps that’s unfair?

I felt that the ‘Mission Impossible’ initiative I put to the board almost exactly a year ago, could have tapped into a rich seam of unexplored experiences. Lived experience is a powerful thing and should not be ignored or avoided. My two ‘Missions’ were extremely productive.

These however, are overbalanced by the plus side of the MiR equation, there are a large number of really super MiR initiatives that have been a great success. Over 100 delegates attended our first summit, which yielded a lot of really smart suggestions and served to bring professionals and volunteers together to share experiences.

We put a lot of design thinking into setting up the Shropshire Choices website, it’s still not perfect but it is an ever-expanding resource.

Experts by Experience have a standing invitation to attend the senior ‘DMT’ meetings where ASC policy is discussed and formed, that’s a great step forward on the TLAP Ladder of Participation.

We were finalists at the MJ Awards ceremony in London last year for ‘Excellence in Community Engagement’, only narrowly pipped to the post by a worthy Durham Council team.

A great deal of thought went into re-vamping the Local Account to make it more of a readable uplifting document, rather than a dull list of facts, graphs and tables.

MiR have launched a new file sharing system SharePoint, which, as it becomes more widely adopted, will enable the sharing of important information and ideas amongst the various Partnership boards. In the early days of MiR, I spent a lot of time trying to understand and simplify the way that the ISF system was explained. Last year, we launched the newly updated ASC Factsheets, cross referenced and complete with ‘best before’ dates. These were born out of frustration of trying to make sense of that enormous package of repeatedly-photocopied, out-of-date information that used to weigh down the postman, on its way to a poor unsuspecting recipient.

As I write this, I believe that the Community Catalysts initiative, which Stewart and I brought back from a conference last year, is being trialled in Oswestry.

I think I can safely say that there has been a lot to crow about in the work which has come out of the MiR board over the last few years. There seems to be a general awareness of the MiR brand within SC and our successes are being recognised locally and nationally. The launch of the new MiR will be a great challenge for Shropshire Council, which I am sure they will approach with relish. *J Hancock. 04 10 2018*