

Making it Real Update: ‘Bringing lived experience to the heart of Adult Social Care (ASC) in Shropshire’



Making it Real (MiR) in Shropshire has developed well in recent times and as planned, the new, expanded Making it Real Board met for the first time on Friday 27th October. This first meeting was intended to help us find our feet and clarify what we wanted to achieve, as well as best ways of working.

One important point of discussion was whether we change the name of the Making it Real Board. We had received many suggestions about a new name, from staff and members of MiR Advisory Groups. People told us that the name should simply “describe what’s in the tin”! But none of the new names suggested seemed to fit. This got us thinking...

‘Making it Real’ is a national brand and we’re trying to use it in a certain way in Shropshire. Let’s remember where this all began. ‘Making it Real’ was originally an idea that emanated from the national organisation ‘Think Local Act Personal’ (TLAP).

Through a series of what are called “I” statements, “Making it Real set out what people who use services and carers (might) expect to see and experience if support services are truly personalised. They are set of “progress markers” - written by real people and families - that can help an organisation to check how they are going towards transforming adult social care. The aim of Making it Real is for people to have more choice and control so they can live full and independent lives” (read the full statement and find out more on the [TLAP website](#)).

The last line here is crucial and in Shropshire we are using the name and approach of MiR in an effort to make sure that Social Care Services are responsive to the experience and feedback from people who use services and their carers. Reminding ourselves of this core purpose we all agreed that the name Making it Real was still very fitting for our new expanded Board.

We want the voice of lived experience to be heard, valued and used to inform developments and practice in Shropshire’s Adult Social Care. Making it Real should question and provide challenge in the development of ASC. One member of the Board laughed when her questioning and challenging role was described as the “grit in the system that creates a pearl”.

Well, we’ll refer to people with lived experience as “experts by experience” (even though many may not see themselves as experts). This group is wide ranging and includes people who use (or have used) services and their carers along with volunteers and staff. All have important insights to bring to the table. At the moment we use 3 local Advisory Groups to feed ideas and experience through to our MiR Board. This is good but we also discussed plans to align the work of the various partnership boards. This will mean that the membership of each board would have easy access to the activities of the boards as a whole, and that people can feed through to MiR in different ways.

Also, we welcome feedback by phone or email from people who can’t attend meetings and we plan to get regular updates out to people for discussion at their home kitchen table.

So we are sticking with the name ‘**Making it Real**’ and in an effort to sum up what Making it Real is about in Shropshire we have produced the attached ‘Plan on a Page’. We think we’re on the right path. Challenging questions are being asked straight away: Have we got the right representation? How do we support people to be heard? What changes have we actually influenced?

Advisory group meetings are coming up soon, so feedback your comments and help develop both MiR and Social Care services now. Contact Stewart.Smith@Shropshire.gov.uk to feedback or for details of a meeting in your area.

Finally, there’s a lot to do but we want to stress that MiR has an important role to play in the development of ASC. Let’s remember social care is about improving **real people’s lives** not just offering a service.