

# Leeds Learning Disability Partnership Board

## Annual Report 2007

### Introduction

This is the first annual report produced on behalf of the Partnership Board. There is no formal requirement for such a report, but members of the Board agreed at a meeting in December 2007 that one should be produced. This will make a contribution to the organisational memory of the Board and its past and future activities

Some of the items described in the report will have originated in activities during 2005 and 2006 and are important milestones in the development of the Board. The report will attempt to capture the individual and combined efforts of the Partnership Board and its members during the last 12 months.

The Report has **Four** sections.

- The early years: 2005 and 2006
- Partnership Board membership
- Partnership Board activities - 2007
- Looking forward to 2008 and beyond

## **The Early Years: 2005 and 2006**

During these years a total of nine meetings were held and for most of that time, the venue has been St Matthias Church Centre on Burley Road, Leeds. This has, in the main, proved to be a very successful venue, fairly central and accessible. We are very grateful to the Church organisation for accommodating our requests, occasionally at short notice, to hold our meetings in the centre. The topics covered at meetings have served many purposes; for information, for decision and for consultation with members. For example;

### **For Information:**

- Bereavement and Loss presentation
- Health Action Plan
- Strategic Developments: Independent Living Project, Day Services Modernisation
- Regular Updates from Reference Groups
- Regular Updates

### **For Decision:**

- Appointment of Ethnicity/Diversity Director
- Creation of five Task Groups
- Use of Development Funds
- Membership of Inclusion North
- Creation of Reference Groups: Carers Reference Group
- Values and Principles Statement
- Self-Directed Support

### **For Consultation:-**

- Valuing People
- Housing Strategy
- Partnership Executive
- Regular Presentations
- 'Cornwall' Report

Each of these topics have allowed Service User and Carer representatives, along with members of 'partner organisations' to consider how certain issues can and should be addressed to meet the needs of people in Leeds. Examples of these are:-

- Making a recommendation to the Adult Services section of Leeds City Council that when Self-Directed Support is implemented, the early focus should be on <10 young people not yet under any prescribed care regime and <10 adults currently in organised care regimes. These two groups should be part of the first wave to benefit from this new model of funding and the individualised approach to planning for ones needs and lifestyles.
- The Values and Principles Statement produced by the Board was referred to the Learning Disability Reference Group for converting into a more accessible format. However, when it was returned the conversion had progressed to another level altogether. A more accessible document had been created, but part of it was converted into a 'promise' that described expected commitments and acceptable behaviours of members.

- The appointment of an Ethnicity Director for the Board to help with addressing more fully how the members should tackle issues of Diversity in their own organisations but also how the Board itself will deal with such matters during consultation.
- To establish a Carers Reference Group independent of Statutory Services and to increase the membership and involvement of carers in the Board.

### **Partnership Board Members**

In the main, the membership of the Board had stayed fairly constant during the earlier years. This is mostly always welcome as it helps the group to function more effectively and to develop understandings between individuals and organisations. In 2007 however, a number of members have moved on, either because of retirement, change of employment or through the election process of their host organisation. Thankfully new members have joined the Board and within a very short time have proved to be competent contributors to discussions and making decisions.

The current membership of the Board is as follows:

Michael Cass, Co-Chair and Ray Wilk, Independent Chair; Kashif Ahmed, Partnership Board Diversity Director; Andrew Walsh, ROOOTS; Christine Barker and Georgina Gage, Learning Disability Reference Group; Chris Hill, People First; Representatives of the Learning Disability Voluntary Forum: David Hansen, Home Farm Trust; Bill Walton, People in Action; Fran Jeffries, Mencap Pathways and Scott Cunningham, Forum Co-ordinator; Harold Wilson and Jackie Bolland represent Carers Reference Group; Councillors Peter Harrand,

Debra Coupar and Brian Selby from Leeds City Council. Statutory Agencies are represented by Sheila Dunham, Leeds Partnership NHS Foundation Trust; Carol Cochrane, Leeds Primary Care Trust; Gordon Kerr, Connexions; Jane Flaherty, Department of Work and Pensions; Pete Vickers, VINE; David Rosser and Paul Broughton, Leeds CC Adult Social Care; Janet Wright and Khalid Arian, Leeds Joint Commissioning Service.

In earlier years the Board has had many other representatives from organisations in Leeds. The Board is extremely grateful to all our past members for their contributions and enthusiasm.

The Board is delighted to have such a diverse group of members. Each of whom are released by their 'host organisation/employers' to play an active part , but also, to demonstrate great interest in and commitment to changing for the better, the lives of people with a learning disability in the Leeds area.

At the same time, we also recognise that when new members arrive on the Board, this brings new opportunities and new viewpoints. This must be good for the development of the Board. Change in membership also brings essential checks and balances to the way work is undertaken and can ensure that no single organisation can monopolise the work of the Board.

The Learning Disability Reference Group must be congratulated for always ensuring the Board has strong service user membership as well as the wonderful manner in which it manages its election for members. There are many parts to the service user network in Leeds and we should all be very proud as to how well it works together and ensures the user has a very strong voice in consultations and decision making. Well done to everyone who works so hard to support users and the various membership organisations.

## **Partnership Board Activities – 2007**

During the year, the Board had four meetings in public (March, June, October and December) and two private meetings (February and December). The 'public' meetings have always been well supported, ranging from 15 to 40 people, at each meeting. The attendees have been service users, health & social care staff, family carers and others interested in the issues facing people with a learning disability.

At the two meetings held in private, the Board focussed on either reviewing the previous year's activities: what worked well, what needed to change, or on planning the forthcoming years meetings: what issues must be addressed, what do we need more information on, what improvements do we wish to see happen?

At the start of the year the Board confirmed yet again, that as much work as possible should be done outside of the formal Board meetings to encourage wider involvement. To achieve this, the Board needed to use Task Groups and Reference Groups.

The Board also decided that the key matters for discussion in 2007 should be, but not exclusively, the following: Employment; Independent Living Project; Disability Equality Duty; Adult Protection; Task & Reference Groups; Mental Capacity Act; Funding and Finance; Person Centred Planning and Performance Indicators.

In Leeds we have very strong representative structures that support and complement the work of the Board. If they did not exist the Board would struggle to manage the ever-increasing agenda which is locally and nationally driven.

Early in 2007, the Board welcomed Cathy Wintersgill as Person Centred Planning Co-ordinator and Kashif Ahmed as Diversity Director

and at the end of the year, we were joined by Claire Reed, Gina Gage and Christine Barker from the Service User Reference Group and also Harold Wilson from the Carers Reference Group.

The Service User Reference Group, Carers Reference Group, Ethnicity & Diversity Reference Group and Advocacy Reference Group (Leeds Advocacy) have had several meetings during the year.

An indication of the importance of such structures is reflected in the work of the Advocacy Reference Group and the recently formed Carers Reference Group.

**The Advocacy Reference Group:** The group has met on a number of occasions during the last year to review the Advocacy Plan for people with Learning Disabilities.

The group has found that the present plan is still appropriate but will keep this under review. The Valuing People Support Team produced a “Toolkit for Learning Disability Partnership Boards” in 2004. This followed a period of consultation in which Advocacy Network-Leeds, Leeds Advocacy, Leeds People First and the Leeds Learning Disability Forum fully participated and hopefully influenced the outcomes.

The group has also noted there are national developments for people who may lack capacity to make decisions, an advocacy qualification, national standards in advocacy services, and a new legal requirement to introduce a statutory advocate service for people with mental illness. In Leeds the priorities for development will be: Maintain and expand advocacy provision, advocacy for Black and Minority Ethnic Communities, advocacy for children and young people, advocacy for people with high support needs, advocacy for carers/parents, improved information standards.

**The Carers Reference Group:** This is a new group commissioned by the Board and facilitated by Age Concern Leeds. The group is made up of twelve carers who each have a person with Learning Disabilities, of all ages and from different parts of Leeds area. The first meeting took place on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

**The purpose of the group** is as follows:

- To liaise between carers and the Board
- To represent carers on the Board
- To raise carer issues for discussion and action
- To consider issues from a carer viewpoint and provide feed-back to the Board
- To represent carers at local, regional and national levels
- To develop information and training resources for carers
- To disseminate information
- To support work to provide services to “hard to reach” carers and those in minority communities

The group is currently involved in the following areas of work: Partners in Policy Making, Carers Strategy Group, Independent Living Project interviews for Care Providers and Regional Carers Network.

Task Group updates during the year have been more varied for a variety of reasons: the task was not clear or it was too large, leadership of the groups changed, other processes replaced the need for the groups. However, the importance of using time-limited task groups remains.

The Board did not completely undertake the original agenda set out in January 2007. More focus will be needed on Person Centred Planning and its link to the Independent Living Project and changes to the Day Services Modernisation plan. The Board also needs to work out what

are the significant Employment issues for people with Learning Disabilities and how they may be tackled.

Connect in the North is the person centred planning lead on the Partnership Board. Over the past year they have worked with organisations and individuals to develop person centred planning approaches. They are also helping people to think about how individual budgets and the way that services are organised can be linked to person centred planning.

Our main focus has been on the needs of Adults with learning disabilities. This will nearly always be the case. However we need to be alert to the needs of younger people, in the 16 to 24 age group, who are currently in some kind of education, but also those in Further Education, who will soon be entering Adult related services and care. We need to sharpen our thinking as a Board for dealing with this known population and to get more involved in their issues. The Board made a formal response to the consultation paper 'Excellence and Inclusion' and now regard themselves as a "stakeholder" in future consultations and forward planning on this very important matter. In particular, the Board is very keen to see the development of more opportunities for young adults to develop their Vocational Skills, thus equipping them to fare better in an increasingly competitive workplace and society.

Organisational change is often used as an excuse for things not happening. In our case, in Leeds it is genuinely the reason why the Partnership Executive has not existed during the last 12 months. Changes in the Primary Care Trusts and Adult Services have resulted in a state of limbo being inadvertently created. At the end of 2007, progress was being made in clarifying the future shape of commissioning for all services by the Leeds Primary Care Trust and Leeds City Council.

A consultation exercise on the future Strategic Commissioning and Partnership arrangements in Leeds was conducted over several months and completed in December 2007. The Board considered these issues after a presentation and formally responded in writing. The Learning Disability Partnership Executive, we are confident, will become operational once again during 2008, and be an integral part of the new commissioning arrangements and formal partnership agreements between statutory bodies i.e. Primary Care Trust and City Council.

### **Looking Forward to 2008 and Beyond**

The coming year will be very busy indeed. The Partnership Board will have to undertake, and in some cases are expected to take the lead, on major consultations and other significant pieces of work. In all instances the Board must provide the necessary strategic leadership. It will also be important to involve as many people as possible in the time available, possibly using Task Groups and Reference Groups to achieve the desired outcomes.

There is no doubt the demands on members will grow over the next few years. Their goodwill, enthusiasm and commitment should not be taken for granted. They can only be effective members if they are properly and fully supported. Information, provision of reports, support at meetings, general communications, press relations and board reporting needs to be fully addressed. The Board wishes to see the appointment of a Board Project Officer in 2008, to ensure they can meet the expectations of local and national bodies in the pursuance of such an emerging and challenging work-load

First on the agenda, will be the consultation on "Valuing People, now". Work will start in January 2008 and the Board will be in a position to formally respond to the consultation during March.

The Board will also receive briefings in 2008 about the following significant reports:

- **Cornwall**
- **Mansell 2**
- **A life like no other**

They will have to consider how to develop a response and provide leadership within the local community to some very important issues arising from these reports.

There are many things that if they were changed, would make a real difference to the daily lives of people with a learning disability and especially to those with an associated physical disability. We really do need to get the wider community and organisations across all sectors to consider the issues of access and personal dignity. The Partnership Board is very supportive of the “**Changing Places**” campaign to have improved toilets and changing facilities available for all disable people in the widest range of settings. Improved facilities must be available to all in Leisure, work, educational and retail settings, there must be no discrimination of any disabled person and the Disability Equality Duty identifies the “public duty” responsibilities of all sectors to achieve a non-discriminatory society.

The social and health care sectors will continue to play a very important role in the direct care sector as well as creating systems and structures to support disabled persons with their lifestyle decisions. The Partnership Board will take every opportunity to play a full part in helping all sectors with some critical workforce development/recruitment issues in the years ahead. This will be so important in the areas where many more adults will live in more independent and less institutional settings.

The Board can also play a part in advertising the attractiveness of working in social and health care sectors.

The years ahead will be exciting and challenging at the same time. Individual budgets, Independent Living, Day Time opportunities, Employment and Volunteering roles, Learning and Skills development (personal and vocational) and improved access to Health Care will make a difference to the lives of everyone with a learning disability.

The people we are here to serve are entitled to enjoy the same access to services and facilities in the same way as all other sections of society.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Board wishes to put on record their appreciation of the high level of professional support they have received over the years from Janet Wright, Lead Officer (Valuing People) for her guidance on the national agenda. Also to Louise Mills, Admin Support, Joint Commissioning Service who has ensured we have been extremely well served in the production and distribution of notes, documents and all the other arrangements necessary for the smooth operation of our meetings.

Ray Wilk  
Independent Chairman  
May 2008