

Using data to embed a performance culture within social care services

Summary

There has been a drive for service to become data driven to better understand how services are operating and drive decisions that will improve services that have a direct impact on our residents. This drive has been incorporated within various large-scale change programmes have taken place across Adults and Children's services. A key part of these has been the development of use of data and embedding of Performance reporting that is implanted within the fabric of strategic and operational delivery to maximise evidence-based decision making.

The amount of data that social care services are expected to record and collate has hugely increased over the past few years and whilst the use of this data has increased mainly through an increase in the use of performance indicators, this has not had the impact in enabling staff across the Council to make informed decisions that lead to improved use of resources to deliver good quality services.

As funding and resources to support these services have been reduced there has been a commitment to make better use of what we do have, ensuring we know what we need to measure, and monitor backed up with deeper understanding of the service.

Methodology

The approach incorporates a range of methods to achieve a successful output. A theory of change approach has been taken to map and understand the service, its core operations, the outcomes these should realise and the overall impact we would then expect to see for our residents. Whilst this has enabled us to understand what we need to measure and monitor where in the system, so that we are focusing efforts in the best place, it would have been in vain without the programme of work focusing on culture change across staff of all levels in the services to make use of this reporting. Employing behavioural science approaches to develop culture within communities of practice that have fostered peer to peer support across roles to embed a culture of performance management. Identifying and utilising staff that have an interest and skills to interpret data and use it to inform decisions to drive this behaviour in colleagues who are their peers has been at the heart of the culture change.

Within the data analysis and performance reporting, a mixed method approach had been used for the reporting, utilising traditional quantitative reporting, complemented with qualitative data gathered from front line staff.

Wow factor

Performance management is the foundation of our use of data within services, achieving meaningful impact relies as much on accomplishing behaviour change across all levels of staff as developing excellent quality performance reports with simplicity of displaying information a key to success and data literacy of staff being a key enabler.

Synopsis

We had an issue that we had loads of data, loads of performance reports but we struggled to turn these into evidence that aided decision making to drive change in services and deliver improvement in use of resources or improvements in services. The problem was particularly acute in Social Care services as demand for the cost of providing these services continues to increase faster than funding.

Large scale change programmes presented the opportunity to tap into an appetite for change and widespread engagement within services, however, taking the same approach as we have previously taken wasn't delivering the impact, we needed so something different was required.

This approach has demonstrated the impact that standard performance reporting can have on a service, their understanding and drive to becoming data driven when co-produced with service staff and supported with a push to develop a culture of using data to drive decisions and understanding of operations. A welcome side effect has been an improvement in data quality as staff now understand the importance of the data they are recording routinely and have a connection to reporting and decision making.

Across both services the performance reporting is embedded within a service approach to understand and act on the information. Services have regular meetings of senior managers to discuss and understand the reporting and how it links to service operations and delivery. Staff at all levels participate, from strategic directors to frontline staff, triangulating financial, workforce and activity data to make the link between increasing demand, pressures on staff and financial consequences. This has led to improved decision making from balancing capacity and demand in services, to flow of people through processes ensuring the right capacity is in the right place to meet demand and avoid blockages, to helping decision makers to understand the likely impact of increased activity in one part of the system and required actions. This approach has supported a decision to invest in more preventative services including Reablement in Adult Social Care to improve flow of people requiring support from hospital but reducing demand into long term support. In Children's services this has supported continued investment into Early Help services to reduce demand into statutory social care support.

Constructive challenge across staff in various roles has developed as people have become more confident in using the data and link to services to explain the impact of changes to demand or high vacancy rates in a way that all staff now understand that enables decisions to be made.

The theory of change approach enables senior managers to ask the right questions to front line staff to gain insight into their experiences and how this will translate into operational pressures or changes in outcomes for service users. Bringing in staff and resident experiences and feedback adds richness to the quantitative data reported and allows staff to tell the story of their part of the service, team, directorate in a confident manner putting services on a surer footing when it comes to navigating challenging times.

What should LARIA members learn from your award entry?

As in many organisations, performance reporting is a fundamental part of supporting the business or service to monitor and understand their operations and outcomes and aid service improvement. By taking a step back and reevaluating the way we support our social care services to this and the impact it has forced us to challenge ourselves on the balance between the effort that goes into producing these reports and the impact they have. With fewer resources available to both performance teams and social care services we had to ensure the balance was firmly tipped towards impact. Whilst the analysis and presentation of data is important in achieving this, if staff in all parts of the service don't understand and use it to make decisions then the impact is minimal.

Making data available back to front line staff in very accessible and easy to digest formats increases engagement and understanding of the data. It also strengthens understanding or the

link between front line workers' role in recording information to the way it is used to inform decisions that has had the knock-on effect of improving data quality.

This approach relies on a collaborative approach across a range of staff and teams.