Digitally Enabling Service Transformation in Social Care and Mental Health services

Creating a culture of transparency and accountability supporting co-production, outcomes based commissioning and inclusion

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Synopsis
In his recent best selling book “The Intelligent Company”, international management guru, Bernard Marr underlines the fact that today’s most successful organisations (which he defines as “Intelligent Companies”), work hard to use the best available information to inform their decision making. This is called Evidence-Based Management and is one of the fastest growing business trends of our times.

Over the past eight years working with many provider and funder organisations across the UK and in Australia / New Zealand, we have seen how “Intelligent Providers” use “live” point of care information linked to Key Performance Indicators to streamline costs and make better strategic decisions to meet the challenges of the austerity era.

Introduction
Following the recent downturn in global markets and resulting budget cuts in public spending, there is no doubting that provider management face significant challenges in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable members of society.

Supported Housing, Mental health and Disability related Support Providers across the range of service delivery models are under increasing pressure to provide robust evidence to satisfy an array of performance indicators and standards. This, combined with the impact of the economic downturn, resultant changes to benefits systems

“It is really important to demonstrate value through real life stories and also with real evidenced based information”
Quality Director, National Provider, iplanit client
and an increasing demand for accommodation and support has created a challenging and complex climate for organisations to work in.

Add to this the strong ethics and working values that permeate the majority of Disability, Aged Care, Supported Housing and Mental health Service Providers and it is apparent that staff at all levels of these organisations are now having to juggle many conflicting demands in their efforts to provide high quality services, manage risk and deliver meaningful consistent support to vulnerable adults and children.

This paper considers how appropriate use of new technologies, (specifically, the cloud based support planning and management tool, iplanit) to both 1) mitigate these challenges and 2) enhance quality, communication and inclusion. It explores some of these themes combined with practical insight and experience on what can work when committed management and teams collaborate with individuals, families and other professionals to overcome resource challenges and deliver new levels of service.

It outlines the potential for new working practices fostered by more agile working which can support immediate cost savings in a range of areas. It discusses how this can also help manage the workforce, optimise productivity and support the primary goal of being able to provide better services to individuals you support.

**Using “Live” Outcomes**

The themes in this White Paper are not new. The Adult Social Care and Community/Mental Health teams have been using the terms Outcome Monitoring and Impact Measures throughout the emergence of the Supporting People era in the UK and in some cases long before. Organisations providing support to people with learning disabilities have been developing their practice along the person centred vision for over two decades. If we define an outcome as a “promise delivered”, organisations have been required to provide evidence of the impact of their work for some years.
A key challenge in making this approach work in practice has been the conflict arising from the amount of management and worker time required to manage and monitor detailed point of care and support planning and the related quality paperwork, as opposed to actual time dedicated to supporting the achievement of outcomes.

A significant amount of management time, training and administration effort is required to support paper based processes which are aimed at optimising outcome achievement, supporting assessments, managing risk and driving up quality. This has been a drag on progress in addition to adding greater administration costs to providers.

Given that organisations must optimise efficiency withoutimpeding quality an alternative approach has been needed.

**Demonstrating Effectiveness and Value**

The Supporting People programme in the UK has been generally regarded as being one of the more successful innovations within the sector and has enabled support to be given to a wide range of vulnerable groups, often in new and innovative ways.

However, the social care, community health and mental health services arena is a much more competitive market place than a decade ago. Today support providers must now show the distinctive value that is added by their service, demonstrate effectiveness and compliance to quality standards based on real data and cannot rely on anecdotal or sector generic evidence.

**What do we mean by effectiveness?**

Put simply, effectiveness is the capability to bring about a desired result. For support providers this could mean for example:

- People enabled to live in their own homes with support
- People living the life they choose
- People maximising daily living skills etc..

For people in receipt of services, this means outcomes. iplanit uses outcomes that have been expressed by the individuals you support to capture real progress in real time. By using an intuitive, inclusive platform...
which allows service users of family to access plans, the organisation is making an explicit commitment to making something happen.

This creates integrity and accountability, bolstering the relationship between service provider and service user and building on a shared promise to achieve together.

**Why measure outcomes?**

Outcomes are the result of a service delivered. There is ample research which demonstrates just how the value of publicly funded services is perceived. However, a basic principle stands which is that society values the result more than the service itself. In turn, outcome measures can inform value for money decision making processes, something which is captured well by the three “E”s (UK Dept. of Health: 2009):

- **economy** – the amount of inputs that can be purchased given a set amount of expenditure
- **efficiency** – the amount of output produced by a given amount of inputs
- **effectiveness** – the level of outcome achieved given the output

Providers can (using an “iplanit” approach) optimise their operations by “live” tracking of the outcome journey, gathering evidence against the three factors above linked to a configurable range of Key Performance Indicators for the organisation.

This then means that the **total “value evidenced”** includes both 1) individual impact or distance travelled and 2) organisational impact in relation to value for money and outcomes achieved. When this information is captured on a day to day basis as change happens, it does not rely on a review schedule or monthly meetings. As such we have seen that this creates a culture of accountability and transparency within the organisation as everyone involved in supporting vulnerable people understands what needs to be done in order to make progress. It can also harness the extended “circle of support” as individuals, carers, family and friends can be set up with accessible windows into the person plan.
For managers, this means there is an unprecedented source of rich service delivery and quality information on your laptop or tablet device. This enables an informed approach to strategy, policy and performance reviews as well as enabling effective and efficient preparation for compliance and inspection requirements.

**Supporting transformation**

A growing family of UK and international support providers use the iplanit approach to take control of this process and provide this evidence to funders and inspectors on a proactive and ongoing basis. This has mitigated against a service evaluation decision made solely on economic factors. It has helped these support providers to optimise resource deployment and evidence the unique value and impact of their service.

Measurement commences at the point of a service user/patient enters the service and follows a path incorporating referral (intake), through detailed needs and risk assessment integrated into care and support planning and review. Outcome based, progress tracking and robust monitoring, notifications and escalations are provided at all levels across the organisation.

This approach highlights the distance travelled by individuals and/or groups of individuals. This can be analysed using the live dashboard graphing performance against industry standards/KPI and highlighting the support (inputs and budget) that were needed for this achievement.

The above combined with a range of scheduling, budgeting and related administration support capabilities help reduce overhead costs and allow providers focus on the difference they make for the people they serve.

**Conclusion:**

Innovation can be used to capture and track outcomes, to provide evidence of effectiveness, efficiency and economy and to demonstrate the unique value added by your organisation. This can be done in

"Administrative and reporting costs have significantly reduced. It takes less time, effort and cost to collect information for commissioners and regulators.

CEO, National Provider, iplanit client"
combination with improvements to workforce planning, communication and service user inclusion and ensures that the drive for truly responsive person centred service delivery is not compromised.

About Aspirico

Aspirico is a market leader in creating innovative, person focused technology solutions for providers of services within the disability, mental health and older people sectors.

Aspirico has, over the past eight years, been working with a large number of organisations supporting vulnerable adults to develop innovative solutions to the challenge of demonstrating and evidencing value and effectiveness. These include large national organisations, Local Authorities and providers who work across all sectors of Housing and Support with all vulnerable adult groups including Mental Health services.

Our award winning solutions have relevance for service providers, funders and individuals receiving services. They help improve service quality, evidence outcomes, promote person centered practices, save money, improve compliance, empower service users and allow frontline staff to be more productive.