**1. Executive Summary**

This review covers a time of change for the Supporting People programme in Mid and West Wales, and of course more change is on its way. During the review period, the four local authority areas which make up the region have been preparing for substantial cuts in the Supporting People Programme Grant in 2015/16 financial year.

However, the Regional Collaborative Committee has still been focused on improving services in the region. We held a workshop in May 2014 to improve how Regional Collaborative Committee meetings are run, with an agreement to have more themed agendas, and fewer repetitive, process-driven items.

We heard an inspirational presentation from Powys County Council and Grŵp Gwalia staff about their locality-based housing support in the community, an idea which is being taken up elsewhere in the region.

We also looked at progress towards opening up housing support to older people, at a workshop in mid 2014.

I took over as Chair of the Committee in mid 2014, but I would like to thank Councillor David Simpson who guided the Committee from its inception until then. I would also like to thank Arabella Owen, our Regional Development Co-ordinator, who worked so hard to organise events and keep us informed of what’s going on. Arabella left us for a post in a different regional collaborative venture in September 2014. Our post is now being hosted by Carmarthenshire, who have recently appointed Diane Harrott. I wish Diane the very best of luck and I would urge all Committee members and staff to support her as we build on what has been achieved so far.

**2. Introduction**

The Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) - Guidance (June 2013) states that regional collaborative committees across Wales are required to submit annual / regular reports to the Supporting People National Advisory Board (National Advisory Board), to advise the Minister on progress of each Regional Collaborative Committee. The Regional Collaborative Committee forms part of the overall governance structure for the Supporting People Programme Grant, the current structure is available on the Welsh Government website: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-regeneration/services-and-support/supporting-people/programme-structure/?lang=en>

This annual review covers the period from 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2015. It provides the National Advisory Board with an update on developments and an honest assessment of what’s worked well and areas that still need to be progressed in the Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative Committee. This report is a reflection of all Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative Committee attendees; each member, deputy member, co-opted member and advisor has been given the opportunity to input their views and recommendations on the Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative Committee.

The Supporting People Programme Grant – Guidance (June 2013) identifies a number of areas of responsibility for the regional collaborative committees across Wales and the high level principles. These are listed below.

The areas of responsibility where the regional collaborative committee is expected to report to National Advisory Board:

1. Advise

2. Recommend

3. Planning

4. Priority setting

5. Membership and attendance.

The high level principles for the Regional Collaborative Committee:

1. Improving services and outcomes to the end user

2. Ensuring probity, accountability, transparency and scrutiny

3. Operating on the basis of equality, collaboration and co-production

4. Providing strategic oversight and direction in line with national, regional and local strategy and SP Commissioning plans.

5. Being underpinned by and comply with robust and enforceable grant conditions.

Mid & West Wales is made up of Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Carmarthenshire unitary authorities. It is covered by the Hywel Dda University Health Board, Powys Teaching Health Board and Dyfed Powys Police.

**3. Case studies**

As part of the annual review, we are required to provide two examples of work that has been carried out by the Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative Committee between October 2013 and March 2015. These include what went well, what barriers there were, what was achieved and any lessons learnt by the Committee.

**Example 1: West Wales blood-borne virus service**

The service supports people affected by blood borne viruses to access liaison abotu tenancy related issues. Over the past 12 months the service has been effective and enabled many clients to overcome their issues and improve their well-being.

There are 2 liaison workers who currently support 14 clients, which is the highest caseload to date. The liaison workers report to a team leader who supports the staff in developing the infrastructure of the service, including a more robust referral process, risk management and quality assurance.

West Wales Blood Borne Virus Service has invested time in promotional activities to raise awareness and reduce stigma for the current and potential clients. This has included giving presentations to other agencies and redesigning the information material.

Support is available in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. Cross-border working has been helpful for the team as it has enabled individuals from remote areas to be included and become involved in the support being delivered.

Drop in clinics have now been implemented as a resource for clients to access liaison services on a regular day of the month. Gwalia’s CAMFAN project at Lampeter is being used on 2nd Wednesday of each month. The Committee room at Withybush hospital is also in the process of being used on the 4th Wednesday of the month to work in partnership with Janice Rees (NHS). The staff have also been working with Nicola Reeve (NHS) in developing a support group at Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli.

Gwalia has been proactive offering activities to clients promoting involvement and social inclusion such as walking groups to Carreg Cennen castle, Abergwili museum and a Samba workshop.

During the recent Supporting People review it was stated that ‘This project is providing a bridge between service users affected by Blood Borne Virus’ and other voluntary, private and statutory services’ which is exemplified through the many instances where clients have accessed services as an outcome of support or joint meetings with clients have been held in order to provide the client with clear information.

In addition to this, the team regularly liaises with stakeholders. The service has developed an excellent reputation within NHS, Probation service, DDAS and Social Services and work in partnership with housing, job centre plus and Terrence Higgins Trust.

The clients who access the service have provided positive feedback in that they now have higher levels of self esteem and confidence when in the community. The recent SP review also reflected upon the clients further in ‘the help and support that they have received via this service was invaluable, it has led them to access services and provision that they didn’t know they were entitled to which has enabled them to remain within their home, increase their confidence and maintain independence’.

**Example 2: Supporting People Unified Referral System**

**Supporting People Unified Referral System (SPURS)**

The Supporting People Unified Referral System (SPURS) is a collaborative initiative that has focussed on developing a consistent and effective on-line referral and allocation process for Supporting People services in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. The aim is to ensure that service user needs are matched appropriately with the service most suitable for their needs and aims to reduce administrative pressures and risks of duplication for providers and referrers. The specific aims and objectives of SPURS are:

* To ensure service users receive the support they need when they need it, improving access to and arrangements for move-on from support services
* To maximise choice, suitability and sustainability of support for vulnerable client groups
* To set up clear processes for referral and move-on by improving partnership working both within authorities and across boundaries
* To ensure that void levels are kept to a minimum, while maximising throughput

The SPURS project was piloted from February 2012 with a small number of providers and referring agencies. Formal evaluation was carried out by an independent reviewer who has also evaluated other Supporting People referral gateway systems. The evaluation report was finalised in February 2013 and since then the system has undergone further development and additional functionality has been introduced to improve accessibility and ease of use including an online referral portal to allow self-referral by service users.

The key functionality is now working well and referrals can be made online to any registered service provider in Pembrokeshire or Ceredigion. The system securely registers the client’s details from the online portal and matches these needs to suitable registered SP services in any of the 2 regions. Provider can then action these on the same day and respond quickly. In addition the system can provide reports on any aspect of the data collected including generating waiting lists, response times, active clients lists by service/ support worker/ referrer, etc.

A successful launch event for providers and stakeholder was held in February 2015 to demonstrate the system and provide an opportunity to ask questions of the software developers Meganexys. The expectation is that all referrals to Supporting People funded services in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire will be made via the system. All remaining services have now been registered and additional training for staff has been provided. The system online portal function will go live shortly.

**4. Service Development**

As part of the Annual Review, and to meet the reporting requirements of Welsh Government we are required to provide additional detail about the following areas

**a). What efficiencies have been introduced by regional collaborative committees to ensure that services are commissioned and run in a more effective way for end users particularly given the ongoing pressures on funding?**

All four local authorities in Mid and West Wales region are focused on ensuring that services are commissioned and run effectively for the benefit of vulnerable people. The Regional Collaborative Committee supports these efforts fully.

**b). How have people using services been involved and shaped decisions?**

When we carry out evaluations, service users are asked for their views, using a combination of methods, including face to face interviews and questionnaires. This is the most valuable feedback that there is, and is taken very seriously in forming the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations.

**c). How have decisions been shaped by the outcomes data?**

When we carry out evaluations, we will look at outcomes data as part of the information gathering on the services being evaluated.

Outcomes data is given the appropriate weight in evaluating services compared with all other sources of information.

**d). What regional and sub regional work is happening as a result of the Regional Collaborative Committees and how has this work developed since the last report that was submitted in November 2013**

There are 2 sub-regional projects in Mid and West Wales, which are mentioned above as the case studies.

**5. Regional Collaborative Committee appraisal**

All Members, Deputies, Co-opted Members and Advisors were asked to give their opinions on the Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative Committee. From the 24 individuals asked to respond, 4 responses were received. The following is a summary of the responses received.

1. **What has worked well for the Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative Committee and what are the achievements?**

* Getting together to discuss issues across the region, with feedback from pilots etc to inform further development and continuous improvement
* Presentation on locality-based working by Gwalia and Powys staff
* The opportunity to network across the area and progress discussions with colleagues
* Has continued to meet overview of older persons service delivery considered as part of the older people’s workshop and facilitated by the Regional Collaborative Committee

1. **How do you feel that the Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative Committee is meeting the strategic objectives?**

* The Regional Collaborative Committee struggles with the main strategic objective of looking to jointly commission services due to the huge geographical area it serves. This is further challenged by the different financial positions in each local authority with two authorities in particular commissioning to absorb cuts.
* To some extent although there are real challenges in inter-agency working
* I feel included and up to date with the strategic way forward

1. **How has being a member of the Regional Collaborative Committee:**
   1. **Been of benefit to you and the work of your organisation?**

* Yes, in so far as understanding services being delivered elsewhere in the region and receiving detailed information regarding those services through presentations. However, the question needs to be asked – does there need to be an RCC
* Limited benefit
* I feel less isolated and assured that my concerns and opinions around issues are heard and considered
  + **Enabled you to contribute to the work of other organisations?**
* Very limited
* It gives me an insight into other ideas and the opportunity to spread best practice

1. **How has being a member of the Regional Collaborative Committee enabled you to learn about others’ challenges and priorities?**

* Much of the learning regarding others’ challenges and priorities have been through networking and communication channels outside the RCC
* I could have done this at lower cost and in less time

1. **Can you identify any learning or development needs and / or any support or training required that will further enable you to carry out your responsibilities and undertake your role as a Regional Collaborative Committee member to the best of your ability?**

* None identified
* Best practice in measuring outcomes in social science
* Working in a political environment
* None come to mind other than perhaps extending meetings to allow more developmental discussions

1. **What would help the Regional Collaborative Committee to develop further?**

* Focussed and thematic agendas
* Formal meetings far less often, and informal meetings as needed between
* A few more ‘at the sharp end’ members rather than being mainly heads of services

1. **What do you think the Regional Collaborative Committee should be focussing on for the coming year?**

* Happy with the priorities already identified in the Regional Commissioning Plan
* 3 to 5 key deliverables
* Promoting cross-border initiatives that provide better services at lower cost than would be the case by sticking to local authority boundaries

1. **Any other reflections or comments:**

* This work should be continued as it has huge potential
* The Regional Collaborative Committee still struggles to actually deliver specific projects and move on from being a talking shop not least for the reasons outlined above (budget constraints and geographical size of area). It is also clear that there is no wholesale signing up to a regional approach with individual authorities taking their own directions. I would fundamentally still question the value given the current budget position. It is difficult to see how things will improve in terms of the strategic work of the RCC to fulfil this function continuing with the RCC in its current overly bureaucratic way. The same could be achieved far more informally.
* The geography of Mid and West Wales is too vast, which makes operational comparisons more difficult