

Personal and Clinical Reflections on Community Budgets and Families with Complex Needs

By

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Introduction

This document outlines some personal, managerial and clinical views of the Community Budgets programme relating to Families with Complex Needs formed during a secondment to the programme from NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland. They are a personal reflection and may not reflect other's thoughts on this programme.

Experience

Whilst initially sceptical about the programme and the benefits to health within the first four weeks it became clear that the opportunities for families with complex needs were significant. From the work on family journey maps it was also very clear that there was significant opportunities for all partners to reduce costs if changes were made to how the needs of these families are met. Three family journeys were explored with costs in excess of £750k per annum for long term health costs for the three families, prevention and early intervention could have made a significant difference.

From the clinical perspective usual practice is to manage the individual with limited understanding of the impact of the family upon an individuals health needs. The family journey maps clearly show that the focus on the individuals ill health is too late in the process and that interventions with families in childhood could reduce the costs in adult life.

As a commissioner the work on community budgets may not have been a priority as the focus is usually on services and individual patient pathways. This focus whilst natural will prevent the identification of new ways of working with whole families that reduce the costs to the local commissioners. Clearly from the patient journey mapping the focus needs to be on the young family and in particular pre-birth. Waiting until there are concerns with child development or behaviour is often too late in the life of the child/family.

Clearly the poor attachment of the child to the parents has a significant impact upon the child's future. Also delays in removing children from the family home and seeking alternative long term parenting arrangements seem to be detrimental therefore the timing of interventions is vital. Parenting support to young families may be the best way to prevent the long term costs associated with difficult family life and poor parenting.

Conclusion

Families with complex needs result in high costs for all agencies locally and use a significant amount of resource the Community Budgets Programme provides an opportunity to bring partners together to make significant changes and reduce costs. By looking at family journeys together significant changes can be made to services for this group to prevent long term costs. This programme needs to be implemented asap to prevent long term costs for the next generation.

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