

Report on the social value of Local Area Coordination in Thurrock – briefing note

Introduction

Local Area Coordination was introduced to Thurrock in July 2013, initially as a small-scale pilot. Such was the success of the pilot, the Council, Thurrock CCG, Public Health and Essex Fire & Rescue Service supported the expansion of the LAC approach, with the team expanding to nine team members covering the whole of the Borough.

An independent review to assess the social return on investment has been produced. This briefing note summarises the report's findings.

Definitions

Local Area Coordination (LAC): Embedded in local communities, LACs apply a strength-based approach to working with vulnerable people, helping them to find local solutions that enable them to build 'a good life'. The impact of their work often leads to preventing, reducing or delaying the need for services.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a framework for measuring and accounting for all value encompassing social, environmental and economic costs and benefits. The SROI converts the value of outcomes that have been achieved into a monetary value. The SROI framework is rigorously applied, before the investment-return ratio is calculated. The significance for funders is that they can see the social return on their investment. The SROI forecast in this report has been externally assured.

Summary of key findings

Based on the achievements of the LACs, to date, the report forecasts that £4.8m social value will be created over the next three years. This equates to a social return on investment of £1 invested to £4 of social value generated.

All stakeholders highlighted the positive impact the LACs have had on both individuals and wider services.

People with mental health needs (29.7% of people assisted), particularly benefitted from LACs as the mental health issues affected all areas of their lives. The impact of the LACs ranged from suicide avoidance, better family relationships, relief from depression and better able to manage in a crisis.

Other people assisted by the LACs reported benefits including help with housing problems (avoiding evictions and finding more appropriate housing), overcoming social isolation, overcoming fear of crime, assistance to lead an independent life – including being able to leave their home, carry out day to day tasks such as shopping, paying bills etc. Some people reported wanting to help others after receiving LAC support and had gone onto volunteer to give something back to the community. Family members also reported significant improvements to their lives as a result of a family member being supported.

Interviewees were asked about the outcomes that meant most to them and to identify on a scale of 1-5 where they were before LAC support and how they felt as a result of support. The average change for these outcomes is as follows:

Outcome	Percentage change (average)
Feeling in control	60%
Someone to rely on	59%
Relief from depression	30%
Independence	42%
Isolation	53%
Hope for the future	62%
Confidence	61%
Risk of crime	55%

For stakeholder services - Public Health, Thurrock CCG, Community health providers – NELFT and SEPT, Essex Fire and Rescue, Council services including housing and social care, all reported positive benefits of having the LACs on the ground. Mental Health services, particularly recognised that people with long term conditions were being supported so that crisis situations were being avoided, but equally the LACs were identifying people who were not known, but who required preventative support from clinicians. The Fire Service also recognised that higher risk groups had been successfully supported, reducing the risks of accidental fires. Other factors that stakeholders appreciated was the recognition that LAC offers a new way of working with individuals and more effective community based solutions. Local neighbourhood groups recognised that the LACs were effective in promoting their activities as well as connecting them with local residents. As a result new services had been developed benefitting the neighbourhood. Community members also reported that they were relieved to be able to refer people to the LACs, knowing that they ‘would get things done’.

Commentary

The forecast return on investment of £4.8m is predicated on 2,376 individuals being supported from March 2016-2019. This figure has been derived from analysis of data for the first two years of operation. Any increase in the numbers of people supported would increase the social value being achieved.

Service stakeholders are able to re-direct their resources either to new demands or new areas of work as a result of the LACs working across Thurrock. In times of increasing demand, this demonstrates that the LACs have an important to play in relation to prevention, reducing or delaying demand.

The LACs have become an essential part of Thurrock’s ‘local approach’ to prevention as defined by the Care Act 2014. Funding has been secured to ensure this important service continues.