

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES**

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	20 MARCH 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	13
TITLE:	COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING (ADULTS) 2017-18		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR EDEN COUNCILLOR HOSKIN	PORTFOLIO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE / HEALTH
SERVICE:	ALL	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents a series of proposals for providing community support for adult mental health and wellbeing in 2017-18.
- 1.2 The report includes a summary of feedback received during a public consultation on discontinuing funding for the preventative peer-led support service delivered by Reading Your Way, and an assessment of the anticipated equalities impacts of reducing Council funding for this service in line with previously agreed savings plans.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee:**
- (a) authorises a payment of £2,025 to the Reading Samaritans to recruit and train volunteer listeners to their service throughout 2017-18;
 - (b) authorises a payment of £21,000 to Mothertongue Multi-ethnic Counselling and Listening Service in 2017-18 to support Reading residents from black and minority ethnic communities to develop personal resilience and strengthen their community connections;
 - (c) considers the feedback received during a public consultation on reducing RBC funding for the preventative support provided by Reading Your Way (appendix 1):

(d) notes that the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Groups have committed to contributing revenue funding of £85k into the Reading Your Way organisation for 2017-18;

(e) considers the expected equalities impacts of reducing the level of funding provided by the Council for Reading Your Way's preventative per support service (appendix 2);

(f) authorises the Director of Adult Care and Health Services - in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care and the Lead Councillor for Health - to negotiate and enter into a legally binding contract with Reading Your Way for the provision of a peer support service which complements and facilitates access to the Compass Recovery College and is to be delivered in 2017-18 at a cost of £76,300; and

(g) endorses the continued occupation by Reading Your Way of 1A Rupert Square RG1 3HE under a tenancy at will.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 There is an increasing focus on mental health as a vital part of overall wellbeing. This was illustrated at a national level by the Prime Minister's Charity Commission lecture on 9th January 2017. More locally, on 16th January, the Brighter Berkshire (Year of Mental Health) campaign was launched. This is aimed at reducing stigma and improving access to support networks. Three of the eight priorities in Reading's Health & Wellbeing Strategy (approved on 27th January) focus on emotional wellbeing.
- 3.2 An estimated 26,000 Reading adults are living with a mental health problem.¹ Around 5,000 of these are registered as needing support with a health service, although only around 1% (a little over 300 people) have social care needs which meet the eligibility criteria specified in the Care Act. However, the Council's wellbeing and prevention duties under the Care Act extend beyond those who meet current eligibility criteria. The Council also has a responsibility to provide or arrange services which reduce needs for support among local people and their carers, and contribute towards preventing or delaying the development of such needs.
- 3.3 Community support has become more prominent in plans for quality mental health provision in recent years, alongside the rise of 'recovery' as a guiding principle, nationally and internationally. The Centre for Mental Health defines recovery as: "building a meaningful and satisfying life, whether or not there are recurring or ongoing symptoms or mental health problems." In practice, this means building greater resilience in people with mental health problems, not just treating or managing their symptoms. Moving towards a recovery based approach involves the transformation of mental health services alongside a recognition of the value of supportive communities. There is a strong link between a recovery-based approach to mental health support and

¹ PANSI (2015)

social inclusion. Under a recovery model, mental health services support people to be and to feel part of the community where they live, and to make better use of community resources.

- 3.4 Recovery in this context is about seeing beyond mental health problems, identifying a person's skills, interests and hopes for the future. Factors which research has found can be important on the road to recovery include:
- good relationships
 - financial security
 - satisfying work
 - personal growth
 - the right living environment
 - developing personal cultural or spiritual perspectives
 - developing resilience to possible adversity or stress in the future.
- 3.5 Services with a recovery focus tend to include elements such as education about illness management, approaches to tackling the stigma that surrounds mental illness, and user-led services like advocacy, mentoring and peer support. A growing body of research supports empowerment as an important component of the recovery process, and the value of user-led services.² Numerous studies have evidenced the cost effectiveness of peer support, particularly to health commissioners. Peer support services can reduce psychiatric inpatient bed use, either by preventing admissions or by shortening lengths of stay, and as the costs of inpatient care are so high, even small impacts on bed usage make commissioning peer support worthwhile economically.³
- 3.6 The Council's approach to commissioning for all mental health support is based on recovery principles, driven by a commitment to delivering high quality support in line with best practice and the need to keep services cost effective and sustainable.

4. READING SAMARITANS

- 4.1 Reading Samaritans has received support from Reading Borough Council for many years. In 2015-16 a team of 150 volunteers took 40,000 calls from people in distress, supported people who dropped in at the branch in person, or took part in community events. The role of a Samaritans volunteer can be quite demanding, however, and the branch needs to maintain a continuous recruitment and training programme to maintain the team.
- 4.2 It is proposed to maintain the Council's funding support for the Reading Samaritans into 2017-18 in the form of a contract to the value of £2,025 to support the Reading Samaritans' role in building community capacity to promote good mental health. The contracted service will be the recruitment and training of volunteers to act as empathic listeners to support emotional wellbeing in the community. These volunteers will work with members of the community in crisis to avert suicide and promote good mental health. The training program to learn the skills and procedures needed to be a listening

² Richard Warner, 2010

³ Trachtenberry et al, 2013

volunteer includes thirty hours of classroom based training. Further to satisfactory completion of the classroom based training further training and support will be provided via mentoring whilst performing the service.

5. MOTHERTONGUE

- 5.1 Mothertongue is a culturally sensitive, professional counselling and listening service, which also provides various group sessions to promote social inclusion, and support to enable people whose first language is not English to access other community services. 250 people used the service in 2015-16. The number of individual or couple counselling sessions offered is limited from the outset, so that people do not become reliant on a service. Rather, the service aims to build people's coping strategies and maximise their opportunities for inclusion within their local community.
- 5.2 Reading Borough Council has provided funding support to Mothertongue for a number of years. As part of the Council's voluntary sector savings programme, (reported to Policy Committee in November 2015) funding for Mothertongue is due to reduce from £30,000 p.a. to £21,000 in 2017-18. Mothertongue is in the final stages of delivering a project to develop best practice in supporting people from black and minority ethnic communities. This best practice will be shared with mainstream counselling services so as to improve those services' accessibility to people from different cultural backgrounds and whose first language is not English. The organisation has a clear exit plan, including the managed transition of its social inclusion support. The organisation will cease to exist on completion of this plan, and will not be seeking funding support from the Council after 2017-18.
- 5.3 There has been a direct negotiation with Mothertongue over the past 12m to find ways to support a managed exit whilst still achieving savings for the Council. Mothertongue have therefore put together a proposal to deliver in their final year with a 30% reduction in RBC funding. It is proposed to provide Mothertongue with a final contract to the value of £21,000 for 2017-18 to promote the wellbeing of Reading residents from black and minority ethnic communities who are at risk of social isolation. By supporting individuals and families to develop personal resilience and to strengthen their community connections, the service will prevent the escalation of care and support needs. The service delivered under this contract in 2017-18 will consist of:
- a basic English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) course, through which service users will be provided with opportunities to develop their English language skills and so improve their confidence, independence and employability;
 - a women's craft group to provide opportunities for social interaction, language development and peer support;
 - language support to voluntary and community groups based in Reading so as to facilitate access to services by residents from black and minority ethnic cultures which will promote or protect wellbeing across one or more of the wellbeing domains specified in the Care Act (2014) statutory guidance and to support them to grow and develop as individuals.

6. COMPASS RECOVERY COLLEGE

- 6.1 One particular type of recovery-based service which has now been developed in many parts of the country is the recovery college. This uses an education model to empower people to become experts in their own self-care, and to develop skills for independent living and working. Within a recovery college, professional expertise and lived experience have equal value. A range of courses are developed and delivered by people who can call upon their own lived experience of mental health and life issues, together with clinically trained staff.
- 6.2 The Council's in-house mental health day service was re-launched in September 2016 as the Compass Recovery College. Courses are available on various aspects of recovery and self-management skills, and modules range in length from one day workshops to longer courses running for 4-10 sessions. The College is open to anyone over the age of 18 with lived experience of mental illness, or life challenges, as well as friends, families, carers and mental health practitioners and clinicians.
- 6.3 At the heart of the Compass Recovery College is a strong commitment to have service users shape their own futures as well as the future direction of the College. On registering with Compass, people are asked to complete an individual Learning Plan (ILP) with a peer trainer. This helps each student to decide what he or she wants out of the Recovery College and to set future goals. The College was launched on the back of a public consultation in the summer of 2016, through which stakeholders broadly expressed support for the development of a recovery college style of service combined with access to support in a more informal way. Compass therefore facilitates a programme of opportunities for people to interact socially - whether or not enrolled with the College - in addition to offering recovery courses and workshops. This includes coffee mornings, arts and crafts sessions, and sports activities offered in partnership with Sport in Mind.
- 6.4 Compass currently has 104 enrolled students, and 110 people are regularly taking part in peer led social activities offered alongside recovery courses. The service operates on funding of £64,000 p.a. from RBC.

7. READING YOUR WAY

- 7.1 Reading Your Way (RYW) provides peer-led support for people who have experienced mental health problems to prevent health and care needs from escalating. One-to-one and group sessions are available during office hours from Monday to Friday. Support is available for:
- Managing mental health
 - Entering education
 - Returning to work
 - Finding new hobbies and social activities
 - Solving housing issues
 - Making friends
 - Organising finances
 - Reducing the need for mental health services

RYW has a strong ethos of holistic person-centred support so that each individual is supported in the way they choose that is right for them. Your Way brings people together and facilitates peer support networks as well as helping people to navigate other community services.

- 7.2 There are currently a little over 200 people using RYW's preventative support service. The service is funded by RBC (£109k p.a.) and by the Berkshire West CCGs (£85k p.a.). In addition, the Council provides the organisation with rent-free premises at 1 Rupert Square. The market (rental) value of the property is considered to be c. £6k p.a.
- 7.3 Feedback from the recent consultation about proposed cuts to RYW funding is that there would be a gap if the current service provided by RYW ceased. The current service has been described as a bridge between statutory/acute services and other community support. Service users feel that Your Way has enabled them to form an empathic supportive community so that people who use the service keep one another well, reducing demand both on statutory services and on family/informal carers. Many value the current RYW service for its contribution to reducing crises and preventing the need for formal crisis support.
- 7.4 RYW has been actively involved in the development of the Reading Recovery College, bringing members' expertise to planning discussions and ongoing governance arrangements. The RYW service is evolving naturally to include support for Recovery College students to complement the College's offer. RYW is also involved in discussions with the CCGs to support the re-modelling of mental health crisis support in Reading. Both of these projects open up opportunities for the Council and the CCGs to work together and with RYW and its service users in 2017-18 to plan for further changes and manage any necessary transitions safely.
- 7.5 Officers' recommendation is that the Council continue to commission a preventative support service from RYW in 2017-18. This will be at funding level set previously for this service from 2017-18 in line with agreed savings plans, and which RYW has been aware of for some time. A new funding agreement will need to be drawn up to reflect service changes since the original agreement was prepared as well as funding changes.
- 7.6 Reading Your Way is currently in occupation of 1A Rupert Square RG1 3HE. The property is owned by RBC and RYW is allowed to occupy the property at nil rent but with responsibility for maintaining the property. RYW occupies the property under a Tenancy at Will. A Tenancy at Will is usually granted to facilitate occupation pending completion of a Lease and can be terminated at any time by either party on short notice (usually just long enough to allow a tenant to remove furniture/fittings).
- 7.7 Terms for a 1 year lease at nil rent between RBC and RYW were agreed and a Decision Book process was completed on 10 June 2016. There was an urgent requirement then to relocate Reading Your Way from 127 Oxford Road to Rupert Square to facilitate a series of moves and as the lease could not be completed ahead of the required move date the Chief Valuer, in consultation with all relevant Councillors, exercised his Delegated Authority to grant a

Tenancy at Will. As Reading Your Way has not yet signed the lease, they continue to occupy under the Tenancy at Will. The grant of a new/further lease would normally be expected to be taken through a Decision Book process. However, due to the circumstances of this occupation ACE Committee is being asked to endorse continued occupation of the space by Reading Your Way under the Tenancy at Will.

8. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 8.1 Promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing features strongly in Reading's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-20, with three of the eight priorities having this focus:
- Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing in children and young people
 - Reducing deaths by suicide
 - Reducing loneliness and social isolation
- 8.2 The proposals contained in this report are aligned with the following corporate service priorities:
- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable
 - Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy living
 - Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities
- 8.3 The Council's Commissioning Intentions as presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 27th January 2017, include the following in relation to mental health services:
"We will re-commission our support for mental health peer support aligned to the Recovery College and on a recovery approach."

9. COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 9.1 The Council ran a public consultation between 13th July and 23rd August 2016 on community support for mental wellbeing. This sought views on the further development of a recovery approach in Reading - in the form of a recovery college - and what other community support people might look for to complement a recovery college.
- 9.2 People identified a number of benefits they would expect a Reading recovery college to deliver - helping people to make sense of mental health, understand treatment options, build self confidence, be better able to navigate services (not just mental health support specifically), and develop life and employment skills. In terms of enhancing social contact, most people said that a recovery college could be an important part of this, but stressed the importance of opportunities to engage with peers outside of a classroom setting. Some people felt that service users who had struggled at school would feel that a 'college' was not for them. This was thought to be partly a problem of negative associations with particular language, but not solely a presentational issue. There were also concerns that some people may find a Recovery College too structured and therefore inaccessible.
- 9.3 In terms of crisis support, people felt the biggest gap currently was for early intervention at the start of a difficult period. Several people relayed

experiences of trying to access crisis support when they felt a crisis coming on, only to be told their need wasn't severe enough to qualify for the service they were trying to reach. Those people had gone on to access crisis support when their condition escalated, but felt that their attempts at self management had not been properly supported. People felt that access to safe space at an early stage was needed to avert full blown crises, and for this to be direct access outside of scheduled or pre-booked sessions. This feedback was shared with CCG commissioners to help inform their review of crisis provision in Reading.

- 9.4 RBC launched a further public consultation on 7 December 2016 on the future of its funding for the preventative peer support service provided by Reading Your Way ('RYW'). This consultation ran alongside an exploration by the Berkshire West CCGs of developing a cafe haven style service to support people in mental health crisis. The consultation was used to gather detailed feedback on the likely impact of the Council ceasing to fund RYW. There were conversations with service users, families and other providers about the role RYW's service had played in supporting people and in helping them to form or strengthen connections with the community and other support.
- 9.5 The Council and the CCGs maintained a dialogue throughout the consultation period and shared stakeholder feedback on their respective plans. This led to an agreement that both commissioners would continue to support RYW's preventative peer support service into 2017-18. On 10th February 2017, the Council issued a press release setting this out. Understandably, formal consultation feedback then slowed down dramatically. The annexed consultation report (appendix 1) therefore simply summarises the issues as highlighted during the earlier part of the consultation period. It does not reflect the true level of interest in the issues, as many stakeholders had prepared to submit responses at the end of the consultation period, but decided this was unnecessary in the light of the Council's announcement. In particular, a petition prepared for this committee was not presented.
- 9.6 Reading has a range of community services providing listening support, support to stay active and enjoy a healthier lifestyle, to develop employment skills, meet socially and get advice on money and housing issues. However, consultation feedback was that there would still be a gap if the current service provided by RYW ceased. Alongside formal consultation feedback, the Council received a number of personal testimonials from service users describing the difference RYW's support had made to them. People described RYW as a safe space where they can rediscover and develop skills, including how to start trusting other people and forming bonds which help them to enjoy a more meaningful life. Knowing that ongoing support is available from RYW has given many service users the confidence to move on to face new challenges and take up new opportunities.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Health and Social Care Act (2012) gives duties to local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to develop a Health and Wellbeing Strategy and to take account of the findings of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in the development of commissioning plans. Section 2(1) of the Care Act (2014) places a duty on local authorities to provide or arrange

services that reduce needs for support among people and their carers in the local area, and contribute towards preventing or delaying the development of such needs.

- 10.2 Reading's JSNA highlights the need for people with mental health problems to be better supported to live healthy lives so as to bring life expectancy on a par with that of the rest of the population. The JSNA recites some of the evidence in support of a preventative and recovery-based approach to mental health and concludes that there is a need to develop a socially-inclusive Reading that promotes access to social networks for people with mental health problems.
- 10.3 Members of the ACE Committee are under a legal duty to comply with the public sector equality duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010). In order to comply with this duty, members must positively seek to prevent discrimination, and protect and promote the interests of vulnerable groups. Those who are likely to use the services described in this report will most probably be in possession of at least one of the 'protected characteristics' as set out in the Equality Act, and members must therefore consider the likely equality impacts of the decisions they make on the recommendations presented to them.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 Reducing the level of funding for the current service provided by Reading Your Way carries the risk that people will have less access to preventative mental health support and so be more likely to require crisis support and/or develop greater care and support needs. The proposed level of funding from RBC in 2017-18 - in line with previously agreed savings plans - equates to a reduction of 17% in the total revenue funding the service receives in 2016-17. This is unlikely to reduce the total number of people who can access the service, but is likely to reduce the extent of individuals' contact with the service.
- 11.2 All users of RYW have mental health problems and are likely to fit the definition of 'disability' within the terms of the Equality Act 2010. Family / informal carers of service users have been identified as additional beneficiaries of the current service, and these carers are likely to qualify for Equality Act protection by virtue of association. Some demographic groups are over represented in the current RYW service user group. This means that reducing the level of funding for RYW could have a disproportionate negative impact on some protected groups.
- 11.3 The risks of adverse equality impacts can be mitigated in part by raising awareness of other sources of community support and by working with community groups to improve their accessibility by and relevance to adults with mental health needs.
- 11.4 A full Equality Impact Assessment appears at Appendix 2.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Following a wide-ranging budget consultation in 2015, the Council's Policy Committee approved a series of savings measures including a reduction in the

Council's expenditure on neighbourhood preventative services delivered by the voluntary and community sector. This savings plan included a 30% reduction in the budget for Mothertongue's service (a reduction of £9,000 leaving a budget of £21,000) and for mental health daytime peer support from 2017-18 (a reduction of £32,700 leaving £76,300 p.a.).

- 12.2 A report to Policy Committee in December 2016 described an £18.4m budget gap for the period 2017-20. This gap had been calculated on the assumption that all savings plans agreed previously would be delivered. Beyond this, the Council needed to implement a Financial Sustainability Plan (as submitted to central government) based on managing demand, increases in productivity, strategic commissioning and reductions in service. In order to achieve the substantial savings needed, Policy Committee approved a package of measures including the launch of a public consultation on ceasing funding to Reading Your Way altogether at the end of the current funding agreement. This would increase savings by £76,300 p.a. in addition to the £32,700 p.a. saving already planned.
- 12.3 A number of key mandatory functions funded from Public Health Grant are predicting an underspend for 2016-17. As many of these service are demand led, it is difficult to adjust budgets in year to reflect overall take up. This is particularly evident in our sexual health spend as there does not seem to be a consistent demand. Fortunately for the Council the Public Health Grant can be carried forward into subsequent years and it is proposed that the £76,300 required for Reading Your Way in 2017-18 is funded from the carry forward underspend.
- 12.4 If a concessionary rental to Reading Your Way is approved, there will be a potential loss of income of circa £6,000 p.a. in 2017-18.

13. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Consultation report

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Proposed service offers and budget proposals 2016-19 to narrow the budget gap

- report to Policy Committee 20.07.2015

Narrowing the Gap Commissioning Framework and support for the third sector

- report to Policy Committee 02.11.2015

Proposed service offers and budget proposals 2016-19 to narrow the budget gap

- report to Policy Committee 30.11.2015

Council-Owned Premises Occupied by the Third Sector - Policy Statement

- report to Policy Committee 18.01.2016

Budget proposals 2017-20 to narrow the budget gap

- report to Policy Committee 05.12.2016

Appendix 1



Reading Your Way

consultation report – March 2017

Executive Summary

Reading Borough Council ('the Council') launched a public consultation on 7 December 2016 on the future of its funding for the preventative peer support service provided by Reading Your Way ('RYW'). This is a service for people with personal experience of mental health problems, although it also benefits family/informal carers.

This consultation ran alongside an exploration by the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Groups ('the CCGs') of developing a cafe haven style service to support people in mental health crisis. This included a proposal that RYW be commissioned to support the café haven instead of delivering its current service, which would have left the Council as the sole funder of the preventative service.

The consultation was used to gather detailed feedback on the likely impact of the Council ceasing to fund RYW. There were conversations with service users, families and other providers about what other support would be available, including the new Recovery College, launched in September 2016 in response to previous consultation feedback.

The Council and the CCGs maintained a dialogue throughout the consultation period and shared stakeholder feedback on their respective plans. This led to an agreement that both commissioners would continue to support RYW's preventative peer support service into 2017-18. On 10th February 2017, the Council issued a press release setting this out. Understandably, formal consultation feedback then slowed down dramatically. This report therefore simply summarises the issues as highlighted during the earlier part of the consultation period. It does not reflect the true level of interest in the issues, as many stakeholders had prepared to submit responses at the end of the consultation period, but decided this was unnecessary in the light of the Council's announcement. In particular, a petition prepared for presentation to the Adult Care Children's Services and Education Committee was not presented.

Reading support for mental health

Reading Your Way is a voluntary sector organisation commissioned by the Council and by the CCGs to provide group and one-to-one support for personal recovery from mental health difficulties, primarily through peer mentoring. Sessions include drop-ins, social and sporting activities, hospital outreach, a men's group and a women's group. Support includes assistance with practical issues, such as housing and benefits, which may act as triggers for some service users. In 2015-16 there were 190 service users at any one time and the service currently employs 4 staff. RYW operates alongside a number of other community services for mental health as well as statutory services as described below.

People with severe and complex mental health needs can access statutory support services through the *Community Mental Health Team*, subject to meeting eligibility criteria. The service is open Monday to Friday from 9 to 5. There is also an out of hours *Mental Health Crisis Service* which is available 24 hours 7 days a week.

For housing advice, people can contact the Council's *Housing Advice Service*. Where someone needs help to maintain their tenancy and prevent homelessness, they can be referred on to *Launchpad's Floating Support* service. Money and debt advice is available from:

- *Citizens Advice Reading*
- *Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit*
- *Reading Frontline*
- *Communicare*
- *N:Quire*
- *Christians Against Poverty*

These are not mental health specific services, but providers are expected to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate people with mental health needs.

Other listening and support services available to Reading residents include:

- *Talking Therapies* - a free NHS service which people can self-refer to, but there is usually a waiting list
- *Mums in Mind* - for mothers feeling alone or anxious
- *Mothertongue* - culturally sensitive counselling and listening
- *Listening Place* - bereavement support group
- *Depression Xpression* - a peer-led support group
- *Anxiety Alliance* - an advice and support telephone service
- *Papyrus* - support for teenagers and young adults who are distressed or suicidal
- *Reading Samaritans* - a 24/7 phonenumber plus a daytime/evening drop in support for people who are anxious, depressed or suicidal
- *CALMzone* - online and telephone support for men at risk of suicide

Reading residents can also access national helplines run by:

- *Rethink Mental Illness*
- *Mental Health Foundation*
- *Sane*

Services which Reading residents can access for help with employment or other support to find volunteering opportunities include:

- ***New Directions*** - for career advice and guidance as well as a wide range of courses to develop skills
- ***The Earley Charity*** - employability workshops
- ***Adviza*** - support and mentoring for young people not in employment or training
- ***ElevateMe*** - careers information and advice for young people
- ***Ways and Means Trust*** - job coaching and supported employment for people wanting to become work ready
- ***Reading Voluntary Action*** - offers a volunteer matching service

People who are specifically looking for opportunities to engage with others socially can find community groups through the ***Reading Services Guide***. Most of these are not aimed at people with mental health difficulties in particular, but will often include people with experience of mental health problems amongst their service users and volunteers.

In September 2016, the Council launched the ***Compass Recovery College*** for Mental Health. The College is based on the premise that meaningful activities are important in helping people rebuild their lives after experiencing mental health problems. The right activities help people to develop new skills for living and working, and more or stronger social relationships. By choosing from a range of courses available, students at the Recovery College become experts in their own self-care, and discover or re-discover their own resources to help achieve their goals. Lots of different people can deliver Recovery College courses. People with their own experience of mental health problems can both support the College and benefit from its opportunities for development by becoming peer tutors or mentors.

Like other colleges, Recovery Colleges can include a very valuable social and welfare side. Compass offers a range of social and leisure groups alongside putting on courses. These groups can be accessed by enrolled students and others.

Feedback on the proposal to cut Council funding for RYW preventative support

People were asked to comment on the proposal that the Council discontinue funding Reading Your Way at the end of its current agreement on 31st March 2017. Those who had used or knew the service were asked to comment on the likely impact of discontinuing funding, how service users could be supported to access alternative support, and what gaps in service there could be. Although people were being asked to comment on a discontinuation of Council funding only, given the parallel conversations about the CCGs asking RYW to provide a different service (support for the café haven), most responses considered the impact of the RYW preventative support stopping altogether.

The importance of preventative support for mental health

Responses drew attention to evidence about the prevalence of mental health problems and the need for /impact of preventative approaches. This included the economic case for mental health support as set out by the Mental Health Foundation, i.e:

- 1 in 4 people will experience MH problems
- There is already insufficient investment in prevention and too much focus on crisis
- There are links between mental health and physical health problems
- There are links between mental health, suicide (the leading cause of death in men under 40) and self harm
- Isolation is a very significant factor in mental health difficulties
- Peer support is very valuable

RYW users described how the proposals to cut the current RYW service left them feeling not only concerned about what this meant for local policy on mental health but also personally devalued. This brought people's individual fragilities to the fore, and the consultation in itself was a source of considerable distress for some. Because of this, the Council made a public announcement as soon as a way forward was found to continue funding into 2017-18, ahead of the planned closed date for the consultation.

A community which helps to reduce social isolation

Many service users and families described RYW as a community rather than a service, e.g. "This is a supportive community which works to keep people well, but it needs a centre to operate from."

People described strong bonds between the RYW members, and the importance of a service which enables people to build trust and rapport with one another. People described how they had benefited from a feeling of belonging at RYW. RYW was often described as welcoming, and providing a place to be able to talk openly and freely. People who use the service are confident they won't be judged and they

value the opportunities RYW provides for people to interact with others in an environment without expectations.

Many service users recognise the importance of social contact as part of their recovery. RYW service users value having access to a range of opportunities for peer support. This includes the Sport in Mind sessions in leisure centres and the Recovery College groups which meet in venues such as coffee shops, although not everyone who took part in the consultation was aware of these. However, RYW facilitates peer support sessions in private non clinical spaces, and sometimes that privacy is very important to people.

Empowering people to self manage

RYW service users described the current service as an accessible form of support which enabled them to self manage from the earliest signs of difficulties starting to emerge. Many users had also had experience of turning to the Crisis Team, for example, but had been frustrated either by eligibility criteria for that service or by having to go through lengthy explanations. By contrast, the RYW service enables people to “use existing relationships to seek support in a pre-crisis situation”.

People valued the way RYW support is tailored to individual need. The staff and peer mentors are held in high regard, and felt to be absolutely dedicated to supporting recovery. RYW users described the peer support volunteers as a substantial and high calibre support workforce - and pointed out what good value for money they represent.

Support to get into / back to employment or volunteering

One of the concerns people had about the current service ending was that this would reduce the support available for people with mental health difficulties looking to get (back) into employment. As part of this, and as a way of helping people to strengthen community connections, the current RYW service also supports users to find volunteering opportunities. This is something which the Recovery College provides but would need to be developed to replace any loss of provision by RYW.

People who had been supported by RYW to get back to work praised the service for its mental health expertise, and its support workers for being able to gauge the right balance between support and stimulation on an individual basis.

Reading Your Way as a stepping stone

RYW is seen as an important link between crisis / secondary mental health services and a full return to community engagement, including work and accessing other community support. Some of the other community support for mental health in Reading was discussed at the RYW consultation meetings. Many examples were

offered of the part RYW had played in supporting their users to access these other services. There was some concern that, without RYW, take up of these other services by people with mental health needs could reduce.

Previous changes at Your Way

Some of the people who responded to the consultation had been involved with RYW when the service moved premises from Oxford Road in Central Reading to Rupert square in East Reading. That move was thought to have had a major impact on some people, who went into crisis. The prospect of the current RYW service ending altogether was particularly worrying for those individuals.

Links to the Recovery College

Around half of the people who took part in the Reading Your Way consultation had heard of the Reading Recovery College. However, most of those who knew about the Recovery College didn't realise that the College included social activities as well as courses.

There were lots of comments about what interaction there could be between the Recovery College and the peer support model operated by RYW. Some students enrolled in the Recovery College described how RYW had supported them to get to a point where they felt able to benefit from the College. For example, the one-to-one support currently available at RYW had helped one woman 'break the cycle' of being sectioned then being left without support until ill enough to be sectioned again.

There were concerns as to whether reliance on the College alone would provide sufficient mental health peer support. In future this will be needed both for enrolled students and for those not currently well enough to use the Recovery College.

As in the earlier consultation about the launch of a Reading Recovery College, some misgivings were expressed about the name 'Recovery College'. The College ethos is to empower people with mental health problems without expecting that these problems can be banished altogether. Still, there were concerns that people might not appreciate that a 'Recovery College' offered anything for someone with a chronic condition. Other comments were that some people might be daunted by the idea of registering for courses, and need a service to support them to become ready to make those choices.

This feedback highlights ways in which the Recovery College needs to develop to become more relevant to more people. There is scope to draw on RYW's experience in doing this.

Links to the café haven proposal

During the Council's consultation period, the CCGs also started a process of engaging with RYW staff, volunteers and service users about the development of a 'Crisis Café' or Café Haven'. Based on successful trials in other parts of the country, this would offer an alternative to A&E attendance for people in mental health crisis. This would be a safe space available out of hours and staffed by Reading Your Way and BHFT with peer volunteers trained in crisis support. People could self refer or be brought to the Cafe Haven by police or ambulance services.

The CCGs talked about the proposal that Reading Your Way support the transition to a café haven in place of delivering the preventative peer support service. The suggestion was that the café haven would open from 6 to 11pm over 4 days a week - Thursday to Monday - for a pilot phase.

RYW service users welcomed the idea of a café haven, but felt it was important to retain provision for people with mental health needs who are not currently in crisis - the people who 'quietly become more hopeless' if cut off from appropriate support. Many believed that crises would become more likely if RYW's preventative support was removed, leaving many people less able to self manage their mental health condition.

The café haven proposal was broadly welcomed, but in addition to preventative support and not instead of it.

Financial pressures

People responding to the consultation generally recognised the need for the Council to make savings in the face of central government cuts. However, there was some confusion about the funding situation in the light of announcements by the Prime Minister about the importance of mental health, and her support for the Brighter Berkshire campaign. This had created an expectation of additional funding, which had not in fact materialised.

Impact on statutory services

Feedback from service users and families highlighted the importance of commissioners working together to understand the impact of the current RYW service across all relevant statutory services.

Consultation feedback included anxieties that closing RYW's preventative peer support service would lead to more hospital admissions as a result of self harm, suicide attempts or other forms of crisis. Several RYW users described how the RYW service had reduced their use of the Crisis Line, had led to less need for support from the Community Mental Health Team, or had reduced the amount of contact they had with police and ambulance services.

Various stakeholders had concerns that the loss of RYW's preventative support service could increase attendance at Accident and Emergency departments. Alternatively, people speculated that if RYW was commissioned only to support a café haven in future then this would just shift crisis work to a different location rather than reducing the need for it.

Some of those responding to the consultation went as far as to say that withdrawing funding for RYW's preventative service would be dangerous given the likelihood of this increasing demand for already stretched statutory services.

Consultation methods

An online consultation was launched on 7 December 2016 on the Council's website. This was an open public consultation, but particularly aimed at:

- Current and former users of Reading Your Way
- Unpaid or family carers of people who use or have used Reading Your Way
- Paid staff and volunteers working at Reading Your Way
- Paid staff and volunteers working in partner agencies

A press release was issued to draw attention to the consultation, and hard copies of the questionnaire were posted out to 200+ current users.

Consultation material referred back to an earlier consultation which the Council had conducted on the development of a Mental Health Recovery College. Feedback from that earlier consultation was broadly supportive of the Recovery College concept but showed that people also wanted more informal access to social opportunities and peer support.

Council officers addressed two meetings at Reading Your Way's offices for people affected by the proposals. The second of those meetings was immediately followed by a meeting addressed by CCG representatives about NHS future plans (the café haven). Each meeting attracted 30-40 attendees, the majority of whom had used RYW's peer support services.

In addition, 54 consultation questionnaires were returned either online or in paper copy. Separate statements were submitted by 3 individuals describing the impact the RYW service had on them personally.

An online petition opposing funding cuts was started but not presented in light of the announcement that the Council and the CCGs would continue to fund RYW's preventative support service into 2017-18. That petition nevertheless attracted 388 signatures. In giving their reasons for signing, many signatories described themselves as grateful service users - past and present - or friends or family of people who had obviously benefited from RYW support. Signatories challenged the premise that ending funding for this service would reduce costs as many felt that people would be more likely to need more expensive and intensive services without the support currently available from RYW.

Appendix 2



Equality Impact Assessment

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

Reducing the level of funding for Reading Your Way's preventative peer-led support service

Directorate: Adult Care & Health

Service: Adult Social Care

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Janette Searle

Job Title: Preventative Services Development Manager

Date of assessment: 01.03.2017

Scope of proposal

What is the aim of the policy or new service?

The proposal is to reduce the level of funding which the Council provides to Reading Your Way (RYW) to provide a preventative mental health support service. The proposed reduction in 2017-18 is £32,700. This equates to a 30% reduction in Council funding for the service, and a reduction of a little under 17% of the total 2016-17 level of revenue funding which goes into the service - from both the Council and from the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Groups.

RYW provides a service for people with mental health problems to access with or without a referral. RYW offers peer and volunteer led day activities, including a peer mentor training programme in partnership with New Directions, and 1:1 support to help with identified support needs around recovery, developing personal resilience and employability, and preventing relapse. 1:1 peer support may cover practical issues such as housing or financial concerns.

The service is currently funded by RBC (£109k p.a.) and the Berkshire West CCGs (£85k p.a.) under separate funding agreements. The proposal to reduce the Council's level of funding by 30% across all of its preventative/wellbeing services was addressed out in reports taken to the Council's Policy Committee in July and November 2015, supported by an initial Equality Impact Assessment. This Equality Impact Assessment focuses on the expected impact of a reduction in the Council's funding to the specific preventative mental health support service provided by Reading Your Way.

Reducing the level of this service carries potential risks:

- a lack of suitable community support could lead to delayed discharges from hospital
- reduced access to preventative support could increase the demand for crisis support

- reduced community support could increase pressure on care co-ordinators
These risks can be mitigated in part by raising awareness of other sources of support, and working with community groups to improve their accessibility and relevance to people with mental health needs.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The Council would achieve a saving of £36,700 in 2017-18 in line with its targeted reduction in spend on voluntary sector preventative services. This would benefit local residents by improving the financial sustainability of the Council.

Current users of Your Way would be offered support to make greater use of alternative support, including personal networks and other community services, to help them manage any reduction in access to the current RYW service. In particular, people would be supported to enrol with the recently launched Compass Recovery College. This would link users to support through a model which is in line with best practice and has a focus on promoting self reliance and personal development.

What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?

- A saving of £36,700 in 2017-18 to improve the Council's financial sustainability
- The safe and managed transition of RYW service users who agree to try alternative services to Compass or other community services.

Who are the main stakeholders in relation to this proposal?

- Current users of RYW services
- Carers and family members of RYW service users
- RYW staff, peer mentors and volunteers
- health and social care staff who refer to RYW

Impact of proposal

Describe how this proposal could impact differently on some racial groups

From the 2015/16 Mental Health Commissioning Plan Needs Analysis we know there is an over representation of some ethnic groups in those accessing mental health services in Reading. This is reflected in national statistics. The 2011 Census indicated that 7% of Reading's population is Black or Black British. The MH needs analysis (above) showed that 15% of RBC mental health service users were Black or Black British, and 12% of RYW service users are in this demographic group. Reducing the level of funding support for RYW's current service would have a greater impact on black and minority ethnic groups than on the general population given the greater prevalence of mental health needs within this group.

Is there a negative impact?

Yes

No

Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact differently on men and women, or transgendered individuals (including any issues in relation to pregnancy, maternity or marriage)

Reducing the level of funding support for RYW's current service would impact on men more than on women as 61% of service users are male. This is similar to the percentage of male service users in RBC mental health services. Most of RYW's services are not gender specific although there is a Men's Group and a Women's Group currently. As more men use RYW's services currently, males would be disproportionately affected by a reduction in funding.

Is there a negative impact?

Yes

No

Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact differently on people with a disability

All the service users of RYW have mental health problems and are likely to fit the definition of 'disability' within the terms of the Equality Act 2010. However, the severity of users' mental health problems will vary, and reducing the level of funding support for this service will affect the users differently.

RYW is supporting around 200 people currently. A 17% reduction in the level of funding for the service would require some remodelling of the service. This is likely to reduce the number of hours on which the service can be accessed rather than restricting access to a lower number of individuals. A reduction in funding is likely to reduce the quantity of positive outcomes.

One of the alternative services which people would be encouraged to access to compensate for any reduction in support available from RYW is the Compass Recovery College run through RBC and BHFT. Consultation feedback indicates that although the Recovery College could benefit many RYW service users, some would find it difficult to engage with the College, particularly with reduced support from RYW to do so.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact differently on people based on their sexual orientation (including civil partnership)

No negative or disproportionate impact has been identified.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact differently on people based on their age

There is an over presentation of older people (50-65 year olds) in the RYW service user group when compared to the demographic breakdown of Reading's population, but this is also the case with RBC mental health service users generally. RYW is open to anyone 18 and above.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact differently on people on account of their religion or belief

No negative or disproportionate impact has been identified.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Assessment of the Equalities Impact of the proposal

1. No negative impact identified Go to sign off

2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason
You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.
Reason

3. Negative impact identified or uncertain
What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

A consultation with RYW staff, volunteers, service users and family members has identified the range of support which the current service provides and has been used to develop a resource pack listing alternative community services likely to be relevant to RYW service users.

Ongoing community and market development will identify gaps in services, and services that could adapt to ensure Reading can offer a comprehensive range of support to Reading adults to support mental health recovery and prevent crises.

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

Monitoring under the 2017-18 funding agreement will demonstrate levels of activity, take up and outcomes achieved for service users.

Signed (completing officer): Janette Searle

Date: 01.03.2017

Signed (Lead Officer): Jo Hawthorne

Date: 09.03.2017