

Local Area Co-ordination in Swansea

What is Local Area Coordination?

Local Area Coordination is a long term, evidence based approach to supporting disabled people, people with mental health problems, older people and their families and carers to:

- Stay strong, safe and connected as contributing citizens
- Build more welcoming, inclusive and supportive communities

Research and evaluation studies show that where implemented correctly, Local Area Coordination supports:

- The building of community capacity and resilience
- The prevention of, or reduced demand for costly services
- Service reform and integration, leading to high quality services becoming a valued back up to local solutions

These outcomes reflect the direction of travel in the Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014 and will support Swansea to meet the requirements of the new legislation.

What do Local Area Coordinators do?

Local Area Coordinators support people (children and adults) to build and pursue their vision for a good life. They work with people who are not yet eligible for formal social services (helping them to stay strong and connected), with those who are at risk of requiring services/in crisis (sometimes in partnership with other services), and with people already dependent on services (reducing that dependence through local non service solutions, relationships etc.)

Local Area Coordinators are based in communities of between 10—15,000 people. They provide a local, accessible and single point of contact for individuals and families.

They work on two levels; most people will just need straightforward information or connection to other people, groups or agencies in order to solve their particular issue, to stay strong and connected.

For others, a more in- depth involvement is required. Local Area Coordinators will work with between 50 and 65 people in this situation. They take time to get to know the person and their strengths and ask “what is your vision for a good life and how can you get there?”

Evidence shows that when asked this question, people rarely identify extreme things like winning the lottery; many descriptions of a good life are simple and Local Area Coordinators support people to determine and express their goals to make them realistic and measurable.

Local Area Coordinators support people to:

- Access information in a variety of ways
- Be heard, stay in control and make choices
- Identify their personal strengths, goals and needs
- Find practical (non- service) ways of doing the things they want or need to do

- Develop and use personal and local networks (thus reducing isolation).
- Plan for the future.
- Connect with, be part of and contribute to local community life.
- Access support and services if required.

In addition, Local Area Coordinators work alongside the local community to:

- Understand, nurture and share the strengths and opportunities in communities.
- Build partnerships to make communities more welcoming and inclusive

Sometimes formal services are complicated and difficult to navigate. Local Area Coordinators help with this by:

- combining traditionally separate roles to provide a single point of contact across service types and age groups, making things simpler and helping people to be in control

How do we know that Local Area Coordination works?

Over the past 26 years, evaluations (including in Western Australia, Scotland, Cumbria, Thurrock and Derby) have shown that where designed properly with local people, and with strong, connected leadership, Local Area Coordination achieves consistently positive outcomes, including:

- People diverted from traditional services or needing less service provision
- Increase in valued, supportive, personal relationships
- Increased capacity of families and carers to continue in caring role
- More inclusive, supportive, better resourced and resilient communities
- People feeling more in control of decisions, support and services
- People feeling more confident in the future

How will it work in Swansea?

We will start in three areas at first, one in each of the three Health and Social Care Integrated Hubs; North, West and Central.

Funding is available for one year in the first instance from the City and County of Swansea Prevention Fund and Western Bay for three Local Area Coordinators and an Implementation Manager.

The areas were selected by the Local Area Coordination Leadership Group (elected Members, Social Services, Housing and Health and the Council for Voluntary Services) to ensure that:

- three different communities are represented (urban and suburban / semi-rural, mix of housing stock / tenure, diverse range of age groups / ethnicity),
- the population sizes were right (10—15,000 per area)
- includes an area with a significant Welsh-speaking population.

The three areas are:

- **Central: *St Thomas (including Danygraig and Port Tennant, SA1 Waterfront, Pentrechwyth and Bonymaen)***
- **West: *Sketty (including Sketty Park, Derwen Fawr and Tycoch)***
- **North: *Gorseinon (including Garden Village, Kingsbridge and Loughor)***

Recruitment: We aim to have recruited the Local Area Coordinators to start in April 2015. The recruitment process is co-produced by community members in each area working alongside paid officers and the Leadership Group. This method of recruitment has proven to be an extremely important element in the success of Local Area Coordination, ensuring that individual communities have early knowledge and ownership of the approach and that the Local Area Coordinators 'hit the ground running'.

Being a Local Area Coordinator is skilled work and integrates many skills, such as

- Information and advice work
- Community building
- Personal network development
- Community asset mapping
- Support planning or person centred planning
- Advocacy
- Community based social work
- Service coordination
- Community development

Evaluation: Local Area Coordination in Swansea (and Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot) is being evaluated by the Institute of Life Sciences at Swansea University. This will contribute to a wider UK evaluation of the approach being undertaken by the University of Birmingham.

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