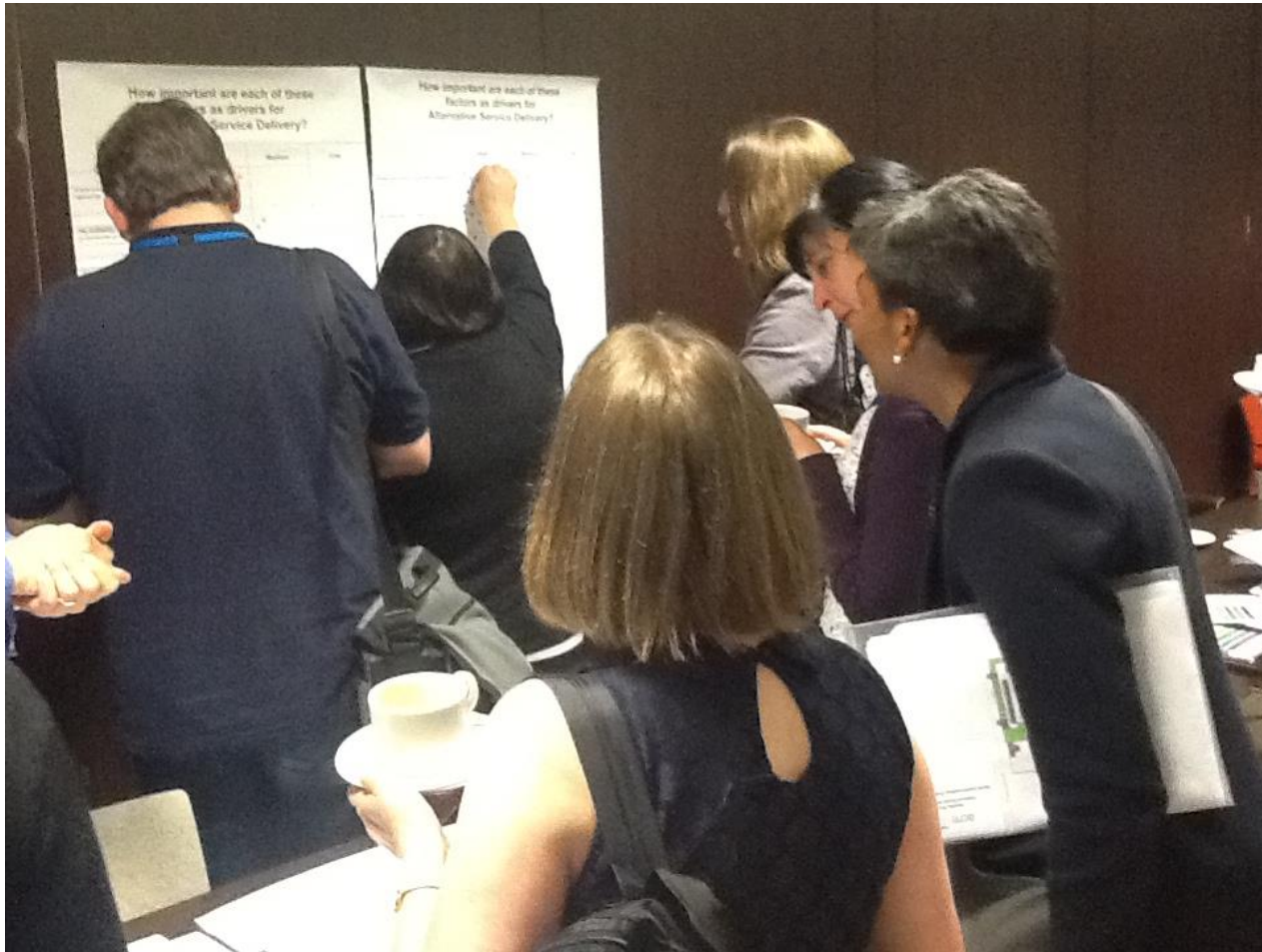


Alternate Service Delivery in Rural Areas – Ivan Annibal



Our Research

- ASD approaches to service delivery in rural areas, identifying the successful models developed and barriers addressed by those involved, the operational conditions necessary for alternative delivery models to deliver successfully in rural areas and to assist shared learning.

ASD

- Many of the models are not 'new'. What is changing is their application to service delivery. Approaches reviewed included:
- ***Commissioning services externally***
- ***Social enterprise***
- ***Partnerships.***
- ***Shared services***
- ***Co-operative councils***
- ***Mutuals and co-operatives***
- ***Internal transformation***
- ***Outsourcing***
- ***Direct delivery by local authority, including In-sourcing***
- ***Private companies***
- ***Co-production***

The scope for the CVS sector to deliver alongside future service improvements?

- The independence of the sector, including the ability of organisations to influence/design funding, the blurring of boundaries between private/voluntary/public and pressures on independent governance.

Benefits that have been achieved through CVS delivery models

- New models give much more power and autonomy to communities themselves, but they may not be willing to take on this power.
- ASD has been observed to improve *community cohesion* through active participation as well as personal wellbeing
- Better targeting towards specific needs and desires can be achieved.
- Under these models, *sustainability issues* also can be addressed directly.
- *Cultural services* (for example heritage projects) also have been seen to develop under these models.
- The development of models at the community level enables greater range and linking of benefits as they are not detracted by department-led approaches within local government. More generally the multiple use of common resources (physical and skills based) makes for their more efficient deployment.
- The general enhancement of social capital and greater use of local assets commonly leads to their application to other spheres of life, beyond service provision

The characteristics of the most effective models of ASD

- User and community involvement.
- Adequate financial, business and needs planning.
- Having an organisational model that is recognised in procurement and commissioning.
- Ensuring assets are fit for purpose.
- Communication and constructive approach on the part of all bodies – including openness to service user involvement and support for change.
- Capacity and leadership – governance arrangements.

The most successful local partnerships and their characteristics

- When faced with budget reductions approaches which realise cutting the service is not seen as the only option.
- Moving away from thinking about the service and service delivery per se to considering the needs, experiences and choices of people/service users.
- Partners learning to work together creatively – putting in the leadership, time, investment and support required.
- Access to expertise that is efficient and locally appropriate – including legal, employment, tax support.
- Ensuring sustainability – where activity continues after funding is allocated/spent; making decisions between short term necessity and long term planning.
- Most see their main purpose as enhancing community benefit rather than acquiring assets with a specific intention of generating income.

The type of support which contributes to successful service delivery

- Mapping assets valued by communities.
- Building a shared understanding of the community's needs, ambitions and capacities.
- Reducing wasteful conflict by increasing transparency and appreciating the pressures that different organisations may face to reduce operational costs/generate finance.
- Considering together how assets might be developed in a way that could be sustainable in either public, private or community hands.
- Stimulate creative ideas for the co-location of services, and the transformation of services, based on community enterprise.
- The right individuals to lead and champion the process.
- Voluntary and community sector infrastructure support organisations such as the RCAN network and CVSs.

Barriers to Community and Voluntary sector bodies delivering innovative service delivery models in rural areas

- Inflexible procurement and commissioning processes.
- Change management.
- Risk aversion.
- Time.
- Finance – finding the right mix of funding.
- Service fragmentation.
- The gap between what people say and what people do – and a need to provide services that people want to use.
- Blurring of boundaries between public, private and/or voluntary/community sectors.
- Reluctance to partnership working.
- Rural issues regarded as insignificant.

Case Studies

- Lechlade Youth Club
- Colwall Orchard Group
- Horningsea Community Transport
- The Project Group – Mental Health Project
- Suffolk Coffee Caravan
- Suffolk Links
- Wishing Well – Services for the Elderly
- Okehampton Work Club
- The Hopes Affordable Housing
- Ennerdale Hub – inc Fox and Hounds Community Pub
- Jubilee Park – Community Run Leisure Park inc Lido
- Malbank Coaches – Community Transport for Day Care

Drivers – 80 Respondents – 3 events

- A local occurrence or issue which engages the community – 2.88
- The availability of a highly motivated leader or community group - 2.82
- A willingness by local people to act as volunteers – 2.68
- Access to specialist external support to make the project happen – 2.44
- Access to professional expertise and support – 2.34
- A long term vision for how the alternative service fits into the community more broadly – 2.26
- A decision from the traditional service provider to deliver the service differently or to end it – 2.20
- The availability of expertise within the community – 2.17
- The ability of the service to be delivered in a way which engages all service users including those with challenges around accessibility – 1.97