

Re-mixing the economy of welfare: what is emerging beyond the market and the state?

Seminar 5: What is the role of information sharing in shaping new possibilities for the organisation and delivery of welfare services?

Monday 29th March 2010

Third Sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham

15.00 – Reflections on the day: Next steps in Digital Economy of Welfare Service Provision – key learning points, ideas, knowledge gaps and action plans, Panel session

Penny Hill, NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care

There is a long history of engagement in this area. She is trying to coordinate informatics issues coming out of health and social care and on is on a committee overseeing health and social care. Feels it was very interesting getting the third sector view on what's often seen as a statutory affair – it's important to see a range of voices dealing with similar issues. We haven't today touched on different types of information sharing, e.g. passing information or giving access, or giving information. It's important to be clear which type we are talking about, as the governance and what we want to achieve can be different. One partner in this is the client themselves, less so for children but feels that adults should be free to express wishes, and the more the better. There is a role for the individual in this process.

Eleanor Burt, University of St Andrews

Has done research on the third sector and some work on information management and the sharing of it. Was part of a 1997 ESRC funded Virtual Science program and a recent NCVO program. A raft of issues came out today, but one that didn't is data profiling and that people aren't always aware of what's being done with their data. Glad that today has been about information and not technology, but information issues are intensified by technology. Has never wondered if technology can do something, always presumed that anything can be done. But is concerned/frightened about this – lots of benefits to joining up services, but how to

manage risk around privacy etc? There is a need to be aware of the 'wicked problems'. Keeping people at the heart of this is essential. Concerned about autonomy in the third sector, so need to continue to manage this. Trust and relationships are key for the third sector. Governance issue is huge, and there is a potential intractability once rolled out.

Martin Ferguson, Society of IT Managers (SoCITM)

Echoes the thoughts of colleagues, and welcomes the third sector side of the debate which has been heard today. He is head of policy at SoCITM, so is looking to influence government on themes of IT governance. Lots of what the Society has said has seeped through to government policy suggestions. They want to put a policy briefing together, and to continue to offer guidance on;

- Reform; the notion of digital delivery which includes everybody is very important to the third sector as they often deal with the digitally excluded. A need to ensure that work is reaching the right people.
- Collaboration; need to ensure collaboration between organisations to meet the needs of individuals. Models for collaborative public service delivery and how this fits in with personalisation.
- Innovation; changing relations between citizen and state, empowering citizens to coproduce to meet their own needs and have a voice.

In information sharing, issues of governance, how to govern information and agencies interaction, by government, social entrepreneurs and the third sector. Looking at issues, but always coming back to people. What does professionalisation mean on this issue? Arguing that we need to move focus from big to small, from linear to network, as solutions are found through networks. There are huge implications of this; how do we find a way of engaging this? Move needed from rigid to flexible, closed to open. Moving from contracts to utilities, a different model of computing with more power to the small. It has been a useful day, and the outcomes will involve moving towards a policy briefing, professional guidance, frameworks and development paths. Looking back to the vision earlier, we need scenarios like Mary's story to get the message through to politicians.

Pete Alcock, Third Sector Research Centre

The TSRC has established a Knowledge Exchange team to work with practitioners and build their confidence when it comes to engaging with academic work. Research is fed through them in three areas;

1. technical advice around communication and good practice
2. protocols around sharing
3. developing further research which can have impact. TSRC can work as a bridge here, and is happy to work with third sector organisations in order to do that.

Questions and Comments

Pat Ellison, Barnardos – There are not resources available everywhere to do everything, and as an organisation they couldn't engage with every local authority on Every Child Matters. So it's frustrating when government expects the third sector to come up with help, which it is not always in a position to do. They cannot get the answer they want like that, but consultation and planning could be done much better using technology. We do not want token third sector involvement.

Penny Hill – This is indicative of a wider problem of not realising about how sharing can be managed on a location basis. Regional planning is needed, but who do they go to talk to about this?

Mike Martin, Newcastle University – Five or six years ago, saw we needed federation rather than integration. To realise somebody else is going to do the same job in a different location then poses the question of how do I then talk to the next level and the next level? This issue is technical on a number of levels. We must start asking the question – it doesn't solve it, but it does start the path.