
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Integrated services: Local public social services rise to the integration challenge

16th International Conference on Integrated Care, Barcelona 23-25 May 2016

Alfonso Lara Montero¹, Mirella Minkman²

1: European Social Network, United Kingdom;

2: Vilans, The Netherlands.

Across Europe, when people talk about “integration” they may refer to structural re-organisation and improved governance; for instance, having a single accountable agency responsible for commissioning services. Others mean improving cooperation between professionals from different sectors working with the same client. There are yet more who refer to integrating various strands of finance by pooling budgets or creating specific integrated funds to support specific groups with complex needs. They are all important and in some form or another they are all integration, but do they improve people’s outcomes?

The term 'integrated services' has come up over the years in many of the activities and projects organised by the European Social Network but we realised that the understanding of the term differs considerably across Europe. That is why we defined the term “integrated services” as the range of activities, depending on sectors, target groups and governance contexts, implemented to achieve more efficient coordination between services and improved outcomes for service users. Forms of service integration are manifold, depending on sectors, target groups, governance level -local, regional and national, the objectives and the level of integration between two or more public bodies.

In this context, the European Social Network has been cooperating closely with the Dutch centre for expertise on long-term care -Vilans in a 2 year project that aimed to analyse how social services provide integrated support with other public services, namely education, employment and health. We developed a methodology through a literature and practice review and identified examples of case-management approaches that assess, plan and coordinate service delivery; one-stop-shops where services are provided by a single point of contact, and partnership arrangements where two or more organisations pool budgets or multi-professional teams (also including users) at local level.

At the workshop we will highlight how changes in the care landscape may benefit service users as support becomes more holistic. We will start by reviewing how integrated support requires new skills and new ways of working; including new roles, new career paths and joint training. We will also review key enablers in the process, including technology, policy and financing mechanisms. Next, we will feature examples of practices combining several of these key enablers.

Lara; Integrated services: Local public social services rise to the integration challenge.

These examples will help us to illustrate that integration is not only about making organisational, governance, budgetary, structural or cultural changes but most importantly the i-word is about people. We have learned from this exercise that a key requirement for social care to be part of integrated care models is the need to invest in the organisations' learning environment, joint training, skills development and in the human side of professionals' relationships. This may include trust-building, common understanding and common assessment having always as the ultimate aim ensuring people's social inclusion and improving their quality of life.

Keywords: integrated care; local public social services; people's outcomes; holistic; relationships
