



Commissioning case study

Resolving Chaos: changing the lives of people with multiple complex needs

The headlines

- This South London project aims to demonstrate that user-led choice is cheaper and leads to better outcomes than the existing system of services offered to people with multiple complex needs and chaotic lives.
- It has already identified 45 people whose collective service use (excluding benefits and rent) costs £4.5 million over two years. Despite this level of spending, they continue to experience poor outcomes, such as homelessness, addiction and unemployment. Emerging data indicates that significant cost savings can be achieved by developing user-led and centred bespoke packages of support at the same time as breaking entrenched patterns of need and negative outcomes for individuals.
- Further work on collecting more effective cost data would provide evidence of where costs are unnecessarily high and help to reduce costs more significantly.

ThamesReach is delighted to be a core strategic partner for the Fulfilling Lives programme in South London. We are keen supporters of the approach to identify high-cost individuals who have poor life outcomes and find a new way to support them. We want to be bold, ambitious and radical over the next eight years, to show that user choice is a powerful tool in helping people to improve their lives and the cost to the taxpayer.

Jeremy Swain, Chief Executive, ThamesReach

What is the context?

Resolving Chaos Community Interest Company is a spin-out from the Department of Health, created by transferring the Department's learning and investment in London's Public Service Agreement 16's social exclusion work into a social enterprise. Resolving Chaos works with commissioners and providers to help identify people with multiple needs and to make an economic case for commissioning the right support services to help them. Its premise is that chaotic lives result in high costs to public services such as Accident & Emergency, the criminal justice system and mental health care, and that user-led choice is cost-effective and delivers better outcomes.

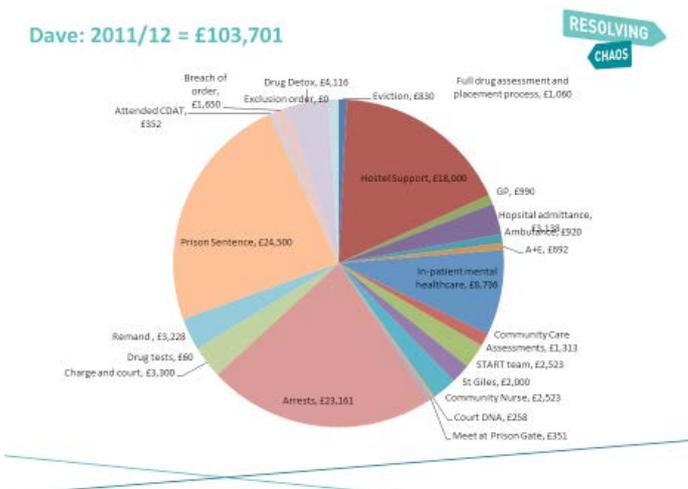


In January 2014 Resolving Chaos was awarded £9.7 million under The Big Lottery Fund's Fulfilling Lives programme to work with adults with complex needs in Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. The eight-year programme led by Resolving Chaos is made up of a partnership of four charities (including Resolving Chaos itself) working across the three local authority areas.

It will test a theory of change that user-led choice is cheaper and leads to better outcomes than the current system of services offered to people with chaotic lives. A unique aspect of the project is to focus on those with high costs and poor outcomes, taking them out of the existing system and offering a new, choice-based, co-produced intervention.

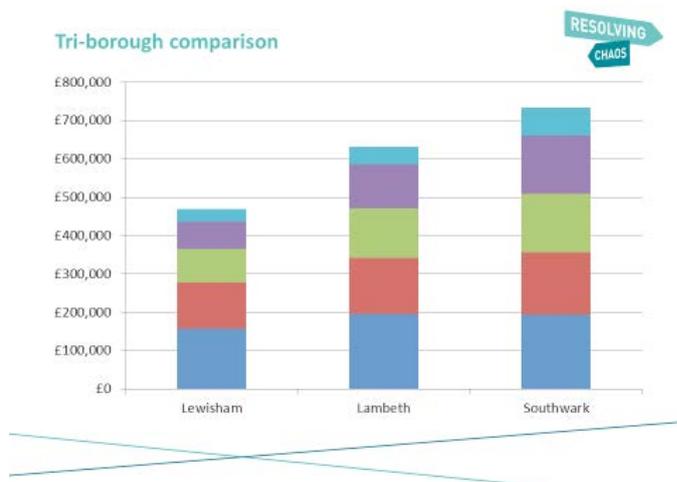
What commissioning and delivery model has been adopted?

Working with local statutory and voluntary sector partners, Resolving Chaos carried out a feasibility study that identified those people across the three boroughs with the most chaotic lives and the cost of their reliance on services. This study involved looking at use of emergency services, frequency of evictions, prison sentences and local support packages. Many of these adults have very complex needs involving for instance homelessness, repeat offending, substance misuse and mental health problems. The result is a 'customer footprint' which shows the services used by a person and the related costs. The pie chart is an example of this, demonstrating the costs within a year for one person, Dave. Each segment of the chart is a different service which he has used and the associated cost is calculated. The result is a clear representation of the wide range and high numbers of services used.



Supporting people such as Dave can therefore be extremely expensive, frequently resulting in calls on costly emergency services. Indeed, the study found that over two years, the services used by 15 people cost £1.83 million, not including rent or benefits. However, the existing system was shown to be not only expensive but also largely ineffective as all 15 had experienced poor outcomes over many years. Sadly, two members of the cohort died within six months of the study but the remainder will be included in the programme, provided that their service use over the last two years has cost more than £500 per week.

The following bar chart depicts the cost of service use by the 15 people in the feasibility study. Each person is shown as a different coloured block within the bar representing his or her borough. The five people from Southwark were collectively the most expensive, followed by those from Lambeth and then Lewisham.



Resolving Chaos's You First team was created with the aim of transforming the current system of commissioning and service delivery for those people. It identifies the service users most at risk and ensures that services are coordinated to meet their needs effectively, leading to sustained, positive outcomes. The outcomes are co-produced between the service users and the key worker, who initially focus on short-term goals – the alleviation of crises, such as hunger, eviction and court cases – but in the long term will focus on goals and ambitions. Everyone's outcome will be different, but it is anticipated that they will coalesce around a job, a home and a positive relationship.

One of the crucial elements of the programme is that individuals are given a personalised budget of up to £12,000 per annum which they can spend, in conjunction with their key worker, on what they feel will most improve their lives. For example, one man, faced with eviction because of his constantly barking dog, was able to spend £25 on a dog collar which released citronella every time the dog barked. The dog stopped barking, the man avoided eviction and the state saved roughly £8,000 in eviction and homelessness costs.

It is important to recognise, though, that the programme is not just about delivering an intervention service, but about providing the evidence for systems change. It aims to demonstrate how a personalised approach through the use of individual budgets is cheaper and more effective than the current system of spending in silos and setting eligibility criteria that exclude this group of people from mainstream services, thereby funnelling them towards expensive crisis care.

Who are the key partners?

Partnerships are of critical importance in this project. Core partners are three voluntary organisations with a strong record of delivery (St Giles Trust, Certitude, and Thames Reach), the expert service user reference group (see below) the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, and the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. Each partner is represented on the core strategy group, which provides a strong foundation for joint working, and different aspects of the service are contracted to partners to keep them locked in.

Of significant value is the expert service user reference group, which comprises local people with diverse experiences of complex and multiple needs, including homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges and offending behaviour. Critically, these are people whose experience is still current – they are still either in the process of being actively excluded from services or in recovery from their addiction or behaviours. The user group is represented on both the core strategic group and its associated operational group. It led the design and branding of the programme, created the You First team name, and played a key part in recruiting team members. Members receive group and one-to-one supervision and mentoring and are also offered accredited training.

The support and engagement of councillors and senior leaders from the three local authorities is seen to be critical, particularly given the focus on system change. Resolving Chaos has recently welcomed local councillors from all three boroughs to the House of Lords for a briefing on its work and the early results.

What has been the impact?

The anticipated benefits are:

- demonstrating that identifying people who are high-cost but have poor outcomes is an effective way of pinpointing need;
- the personalised, user-led approach will empower people to improve their housing, employment and relationships; and
- a reduction in the use of crisis services, particularly the police, Accident & Emergency and emergency mental health services

‘ So far we have been able to prove the existence of a high-cost, poor-outcome group – with 45 people costing £ 4.5 million every two years, excluding benefits and rent. This was our first objective. Our focus now is how to reduce that cost, while improving lives and keeping the service user at the heart of all we do. ’

Nick O’Shea, Director of Operations, Resolving Chaos

The project is very new so it is too early as yet to draw conclusions about its overall impact. However, the following example illustrates the evidence that is emerging about the effects on individuals and about the economic case.

Case study, Nadine

Nadine has mental health problems, but is not eligible for community mental health team support. She used to self-medicate with alcohol and crack, which she funded through theft and prostitution. She was arrested seven times, put on remand three times and received one custodial sentence costing the state £41,000* a year.

With guidance from Resolving Chaos, commissioners were able to build a coordinated package of care for Nadine. She now has a support worker, a tenancy funded by housing benefit, drug rehabilitation and fortnightly trips to a GP, all of which costs £22,000* a year, making a net annual saving of £19,000.

*Figures from: Department of Work and Pensions; Personal Social Services Research Unit, Unit Costs of Health & Social Care, 2013; Ministry of Justice and Local Authority in-house calculations.

What have been the key elements of success?

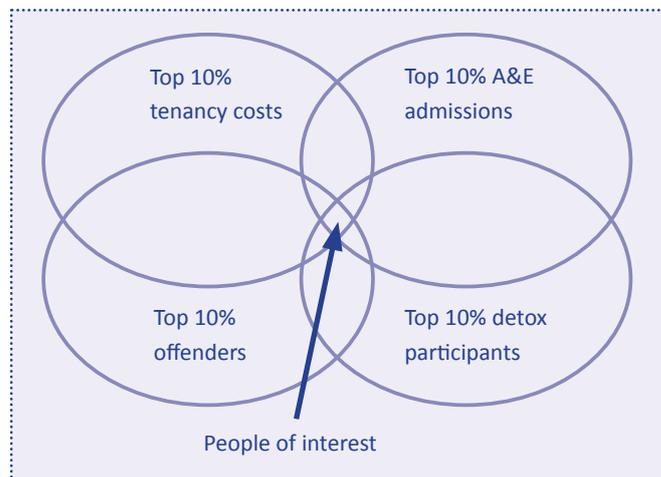
Investment by the Big Lottery Fund's Fulfilling Lives programme over eight years has enabled the identification of high-cost, poor-outcomes groups and the formulation of solutions to help transform both the system and the lives of service users. Without this long-term investment, Resolving Chaos believes the work would not have been possible.

Co-production involving people, organisations, structures and local assets has also been crucial. The Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark project has a strong core strategic group which leads on the development and implementation of the programme. This brings three voluntary and community sector agencies, service users, the NHS foundation trust and the three local authorities together in a formal partnership where each party can use its specialist expertise in collaboration with others.

The delivery aspect of the programme, including the principal service specification, has been designed and delivered with the active participation of service users. The expert service user group helped recruit the team, a third of the You First team have themselves used services in the past, and peer advisers are being recruited to offer volunteering opportunities for service users across South London.

What has been learnt?

A key early finding of this work has been that it is difficult to identify the top 10 per cent of service users – the 'super consumers' who incur significant costs but lack positive outcomes. This is because services are not asked to highlight their most expensive users, nor do they work with other agencies to identify whether the same people are their top customers too.



This severely constricts the ability of the system to reduce costs, because it is unable to detect where – or rather to whom – the majority of its costs are attributable. The result is that without reliable cost information, it is difficult to determine how to cut costs because there is a lack of evidence to show where costs are unnecessarily high.

Resolving Chaos is working closely with a wide range of organisations across the three boroughs to retrieve this information and present it back to the boroughs. Agencies have been extremely helpful in identifying the patterns of service use, enabling Resolving Chaos to construct an accurate picture of service use by people with entrenched needs.

Secondly, some initial conclusions are emerging about user choice and personalised budgets:

- Information technology is a help to people in spending their personalised budgets (Resolving Choice is developing an e-tool called the E-Choice Channel to facilitate this);
- people find it difficult to make choices when they are in the midst of a crisis; and
- people need a safe environment in which to make choices, even if their choices are bad ones

So far the project has confirmed that a group of people exists with complex multiple needs and chaotic lives who are high-cost users of crisis services. It is already generating lessons about what happens when multiple agencies are involved (likened to seven people driving a car); and about the way in which people may be forced to use expensive services because of the unavailability of mainstream services – for instance, regularly going to Accident & Emergency because it is easily accessible and open at weekends or overnight rather than to a GP, either because they are not registered, excluded, or because the GP's surgery is closed out of office hours.

Being a member of the expert service user reference group has been a very different experience for me. Other services I have previously engaged with have left me feeling despondent and I have come away with a feeling that nothing has changed and with nothing to look forward to. With the user group, from the very start I felt that I belong somewhere, and being part of something, taking me seriously and I am being treated as an individual; a person with a name and skill, not just a statistic.

I was made to feel a 'part of' and was actually a part of the team which has given me a great sense of empowerment and feelings of belonging. For the first time I have faith in a service; and trust, with which has come many things... self-belief, self-esteem, confidence and I have a voice! Things are looking up. ”

Amanda, expert service user reference group member.

Who can I contact?

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Other useful information

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