



Sensing Change

End-point feedback report by the University of Bristol

26 February 2013

Date of visit: 12–13 November 2012

Key learning points: How social work practice has developed at Sensing Change

1. Creating a specialist service

Sensing Change is creating a specialist service for people with sensory impairment and loss. In becoming experts in this type of service delivery, it is placing great emphasis on staff training and gathering as much information about people who use its services as possible. Sensing Change excels in its communication in terms of sensory impairments and losses, which is an additional skill beyond generic social work skills. The communication skills are evident through the Sensing Change website (www.sensingchange.org.uk) where customers assisted in the design. Sensing Change is continuing to create its specialist service through the following means:

Enhancing the skills of the staff group. Sensing Change makes sure that its staff group have the skills to deliver a specialist service. This means that staff attend training on communication for sensory impairment and loss, the operation of a social enterprise and presentation skills. Many staff have been sent to a Social Enterprise conference to learn what social enterprise means, and a representative from Social Enterprise UK came to talk to the team. The senior practitioner conducted a skills audit to examine the current skills within the team and to identify where there were gaps. Any gaps are to be addressed through further training.

Specialist training (British Sign Language [BSL] and sensory awareness training).

Sensing Change is beginning to provide BSL taster-sessions and training delivered by Eileen (d/Deaf support worker), a qualified BSL trainer. She is currently providing the second set of training to a group of paid carers and other businesses/interested parties (a 10-week introductory course). The training is also serving as a source of additional income. The staff team have been commissioned to deliver sensory awareness training outside of Sensing Change. The training will also enhance community awareness of sensory loss. Sensing Change is able to tailor the training to meet the needs of the businesses that request the training. A description of the types of training can be found at www.sensingchange.org.uk/services/training

Delivering information in an accessible format. The staff have acknowledged that many customers are not receiving the information that they need or should have access to because it is not delivered or provided in the customer's language or in an accessible format. The staff group are trialling new ways of communicating, such as through video letters. Instead of translating English letters into BSL, the staff provide video letters on DVD that contains BSL messages. The customer can then view the video letter through their computer, in their first language.

2. Engaging the community/increasing social inclusion

Sensing Change aims to engage the community on micro, mezzo and macro levels in creating the future direction of the practice. On a mezzo-macro level, the Sensing Change team work over the whole of Suffolk, but are also focusing on specific key areas in order to further engage the communities. This work might involve working with key customer groups, or with local community agencies, charities and organisations. Being in a SWP pilot has enabled the team to be able to focus on building up external relationships, which wouldn't have been possible within the local authority. The relationship-building activities have enabled Sensing Change to learn about different social services within the areas and to begin to create partnerships where appropriate. Some external activities have included setting up a stall at the Stroke Conference to find out about other services for people with strokes and to network with other voluntary and charitable organisations; networking with Racing Welfare, an addiction service provided by the local horse race course; interacting and networking with private, health and voluntary organisations to raise awareness and to promote sensory loss awareness; and networking with other social enterprise and business groups, such as the Women's Business Group and Social Enterprise conferences.

On a micro-mezzo level, Sensing Change is working with different customer groups with the aim of increasing social inclusion. This might take place by encouraging and initiating new support groups, enabling customers to be involved in a support service (such as the My Guide scheme) to support independence in getting out into the community, or working with existing groups and services to encourage people to more easily engage in the community. Examples include:

Enhancing health and well-being. Members of the Sensing Change team are currently working with a leisure centre in Newmarket to set up a Goal Ball group to be run by people with visual impairment. They are currently working to get the leisure centre to fit the activity into the timetable.

My Guide scheme. This is a pilot project set up on behalf of Guide Dogs and in partnership with Sensing Change. The aim is to reduce social exclusion and isolation by helping people to get back into the community; it is for individuals who may not have had the confidence or not had access to the community. Debbie (Sight Loss Development Officer) recruits volunteers who are trained before being matched to someone with visual impairment or loss. The training consists of three levels: Level 1 – learning how to sight guide; Level 2 – safeguarding issues, lone working policies and some of the major eye conditions; and Level 3 – six theory modules and a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The trained volunteer is only matched with someone for between three to six months, to reduce co-dependency and to increase independence. Once the trained volunteers are matched with someone, they complete an action plan, which includes the steps that need to be taken in order to foster independence. This is seen more as an enabling programme where an individual can build up a network in order to be more socially included. There are currently 13 customers identified from the hospitals and the workers at Sensing Change. Volunteers are recruited through the 'Do It' website as well as trained people with sight loss going out to approach services (OT, GPs, libraries) to publicise the service (see www.guidedogs.org.uk/services/my-guide).

User groups. User groups are being set up, primarily by Debbie, for people with sight loss to have a voice and to make a difference in the area in which they live. The first was set up in Ipswich and this group was involved in creating the Sensing Change website, and in consulting on bus travel. Two members gave presentations at the Bus Drivers' Conference in Suffolk. Based on these presentations, Suffolk has now agreed to sensory loss training for all bus drivers, although this has not yet taken place. The Ipswich group has also been approached by Suffolk Planning Committee to consult on the plans of new roads and roadway construction. Debbie sets up the groups, facilitates them and then withdraws. She is currently setting up a new group in Newmarket. The groups serve as an opportunity to consult and to have a say on what developments people would like to see happen.

The following is an example of the flyers distributed in specific areas to develop new groups.

SensingChange

Together we create opportunities for people
with sight and hearing loss

Newmarket Visually Impaired People's Action group

We are writing to invite you to a newly formed group for anyone with sight loss who is interested in social issues such as transport, leisure or learning in relation to Newmarket and the surrounding areas.

The purpose of the group is to enable people with sight loss to have a voice and say how you would like services to develop or not as the case may be!

There are many topics and issues that could be discussed and with proactive, enthusiastic and motivated people we can improve accessibility, independence and inclusion for people with sight loss. For example: Could library services alter in any way to improve accessibility to people with sight loss?

Our first Meeting for the **Newmarket VIP Action group** will be held in:

Newmarket Leisure Centre, Exning Road, Newmarket CB8 0EA

On

Monday 19th November 2012 from 2pm – 4pm

We have invited Emily Papaleo who is the Campaigns Officer from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) to talk to the group in relation to some of the issues that the RNIB are currently proactive in. We can then discuss ways in which the group can become involved or look at something new.

If you require any further information please contact Debbie Playford Development Officer, Sensing Change 01473 260030

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www.sensingchange.org.uk

3. Direct access to Sensing Change and a quicker service

Sensing Change has begun to put systems in place that will decrease the wait time of referrals and will increase customers' access to the service. Referrals currently come directly to Sensing Change as opposed to having to go through the local authority's referral team, Customer First, a service not set up for people with sensory impairment or loss. The following include four specific aspects of Sensing Change that have led to increasing access to services and reducing wait times.

Duty system. The duty system operates on a rotating basis and has recently been revised in order to reduce the waiting list. The idea came from one of the CCP/senior social workers from her experience on a community mental health team. The first aspect is to follow a flowchart that looks at how to have a better triage system. Because Sensing Change takes referrals directl, it needs to be able to distinguish between what is urgent and what does not need attention straightaway – many referrals come in as 'urgent', although they may not be urgent, according to Sensing Change. The team have produced a document describing what makes something urgent that will go out to partner agencies and referring agencies with the hope that referrals will come in more appropriately categorised. There has been a long waiting list for initial assessments since the practice has gone live. A new process in place involves the duty worker looking at the waiting list and actually taking the top five names on the list to contact and, as appropriate, making appointments to go and visit them. Therefore, every duty day, five more people are coming off the list, which means getting through the waiting list much faster. (This process is particularly concentrated on people with visual impairments.)

The statistics show an improvement in wait times. While there were initially 385 people waiting on the list, with the longest wait time being 18 months, the referral rate since this time has gone up, but the current wait list (as of 13 November 2012) is 110 people, with the longest wait time of 3.5 months and an average wait time of 2-2.5 months. (It should be noted that these are the non-urgent cases.)

Resource centre. Sensing Change has opened a resource centre in Lowestoft, a four-room, accessible building where individuals with sensory impairment or sight loss can come in and meet with Sensing Change employees, such as rehabilitation officers, equipment officers and senior support workers. The centre is always staffed with at least one person. It provides advice and guidance, benefits drop-in sessions, fax machines and other communications equipment. There is a kitchen for teaching independent living skills, meeting rooms to rent out and rooms to provide sign language classes and sensory awareness training. The community are able to rent rooms and partner agencies are considering having a presence within the centre as well, such as a private audiologist. Although social workers are not permanently based there at the moment, there will be a social work presence at the centre, and social workers currently use it to meet with customers. The model of the resource centre is currently being evaluated and, if deemed successful, Sensing Change would like to open others. The centre ultimately aims to raise awareness of the needs of people with sight and hearing loss and to provide easier access for the customers of Sensing Change services and other services, such as benefits advice and health.

Customer journey. Suffolk County Council brought in a customer journey plan about eight years ago that looked at the way in which customers experienced the referral system and the journey through the services. Sensing Change designed its own customer journey, a working document that is frequently updated.

Sensing Change describes how this has made a difference to date by describing the journey of someone with dual sensory loss:

The old system would involve an initial referral through the Customer First team, a referral to the dual sensory loss assessor, then technical officer, then support worker, then a social worker. In a worst-case scenario, someone might see seven to eight people from the same organisation requiring the customer to tell their story repeatedly and to wait longer for services. Sensing Change has adapted the customer journey to reduce the number of people that customers see and the wait time to receive services. The Sensing Change customer journey will look to properly triage from the initial stages by having trained front-line staff who take initial referrals, whether that is the admin staff or the duty worker. The social worker is then usually the first person to see the customer who then refers to any additional staff or resources as necessary.

This journey is being further refined, allowing social workers to deal with low-level needs straightaway, so that a customer does not have to be on a waiting list for someone to come out. For example, if there is a small piece of equipment that needs replacing within a home, the social worker will be able to do this instead of having to refer and then the customer having to wait. Sensing Change is working to make the customer journey more streamlined and more appropriate for the customer.

Support schedule. The support schedule was created to enable customers to be focused on what they are aiming to achieve and to enable the support workers to stay on schedule. It is a plan that is completed when a referral comes in. It includes all the support aims and what needs to be accomplished over the course of the following weeks to achieve these aims. Because it is constructed between the customer and support worker, is written down and is continually reviewed, the support worker and customer have a clear focus of their work together that best meets the customer's aims within his/her abilities. This is in contrast to the previous way of working where there was no support schedule and, therefore, no clear end to the work. Now, the support workers know exactly what they are doing, the customers know what they are doing and they all have a clear focus and know where they are going. The ultimate aim is to help the customers be as independent as possible.

The following is an example of a support schedule.

Support Schedule

Client ID Support Worker CW Support Period 2 Hours

Support Aims	Support Schedule to Achieve Aims	Outcome	Outcomes met	
			Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce Rehab programme 	Week 1 – 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice route to local shops with support worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has good knowledge of route 	X	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make contact with shop staff to discuss assisted service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows regular staff 	X	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Cash-back facility at Co-op 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client is aware of cashback facility, but chooses not to use it. Prefers to go to the bank 		X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	Week 3 – 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shadow MQ walking safely and independently to local shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client is confident and aware of route, both safely and independent 	X	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shadow MQ shopping independently at local shops by using assisted shopping service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client asks for assistance when required 	X	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		

	<p>Week 5 – 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support client using bus to Tesco and make contact with Customer Services re assisted shopping service • Support client to learn route to Dentist by bus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client now knows route to the bus and Tesco • Client knows how to ask for assistance and where • Client has knowledge of location of dentist/bus stops etc • 	X	
	<p>Week 7 – 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadow client accessing bus/Tesco safely and independently • Shadow client shopping independently at Tesco by using assisted shopping service • Identify ways to complete “big shop” at Tesco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client can access bus/Tesco independently • Client can negotiate store, asks for assistance when required • Client aware of courtesy telephone at Tesco to call for taxi (for big shops) 	X	
	<p>Week 9 – 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support client to use bus to town to access bank • Support client to negotiate environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client knows route to bus stop and where to alight • Client has knowledge of town location/environment • Client is familiar with bank layout and 	X	

	<p>in town to bank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use taxi back from Tesco 	<p>staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client used courtesy taxi phone to book taxi to take him home from Tesco 	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
	<p>Week 11 – 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadow client accessing bus/town/bank independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client can access bus and negotiate town centre and bank safely and independently • 		
		<p>Total Outcomes being met</p> <p>Percentage</p>	<p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>94</p>	

Client:	Support Worker:	Date:
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4. Advocating for the community

Sensing Change has ongoing work in advocating for the rights of individuals with sensory impairment and loss. The team are constantly dealing with community members, organisations and businesses that fail to provide services to Sensing Change customers as they should, such as not providing interpreters or failing to provide information in accessible formats or the customer's own language. Sensing Change tackles this by providing information in accessible formats (see point 1 above), interprets and translates letters and forms for customers and advocates on customers' behalf, particularly when navigating through public systems.

5. Raised profile through marketing and branding

Sensing Change has continued to work on marketing, promoting its 'brand' and networking with the community. It is aiming to raise its profile as a specialist service for sensory loss and to build its business. The community and customers are beginning to recognise its logo and brand, and organisations are more inclined to work and collaborate with Sensing Change. Sensing Change has participated in several media events, has had a presence in newspapers and magazines and contributes to local business networks, such as the Suffolk Women's Business Network. Other events that have received attention include:

The Future 50 businesses. Sensing Change was selected as one of the businesses to participate in the Future 50 Group (businesses that were either expanding rapidly or had the potential to grow and expand). This will provide networking opportunities with other businesses and an opportunity to tap into some expert business help (for more information, see www.suffolk-future50.co.uk/class-of-2012/sensing-change).

Resource centre official opening. Staff and community members celebrated the resource centre's official opening.

Birthday celebration. Sensing Change celebrated their one-year anniversary with the staff and the community.

How are the values of social enterprise being evidenced at Sensing Change?

The following list was compiled through communication with the staff at Sensing Change.

1. Customer involvement. Sensing Change has more customer involvement where the SWP pilot is able to seek advice from customers, involve customers in training and public relations work. Sensing Change has set up a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pages/Sensing-Change/297816670258445), and customers are able to interact with the page and suggest when they would like new information added to it. Customers were also involved in designing the website.
2. Engaging the community. Customers have been invited to attend groups within their area. These groups have mainly been for people with sight loss. The groups are initiated by Sensing Change, facilitated by an employee from Sensing Change, and then gradually taken over and run by the group members themselves. The groups have been consulted on different issues, such as hospital transport, the use of buses at different times of the day and the new road plans within Ipswich. The groups have not been found to be successful within the d/Deaf culture, so the staff group are thinking of new ways to engage the customers as well as those who have dual sensory loss.
3. Sensory Change provides training to meet the needs of the community. The staff are able to participate in specialist training that will better meet the needs of the community members. For example, Eileen is participating in translation training where she will be able to transcribe English into BSL. She is currently working on translating a piece from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) explaining the new changes in Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This translation work will be uploaded onto the website, which will be a more accessible source of information for the customer. Such courses and training will increase the skills of the employees and thus better assist in meeting the needs of customers.
4. Participation on the board of directors. Sensing Change has a board of directors that looks at the operations and future direction of the business. There are six directors, four of whom are social workers (Marian, Caroline, Jo and Amanda). The remaining staff have a voice through the peer advisory groups, which have replaced the staff advisory groups.

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