

## Chairman's Report 2020



Another year has slipped by and that is a signal for me to write an update on our Making it Real project.

Things are going well and as always, there is lots going on. Continual improvement is the name of the game and so we can't sit still and rest on our laurels. We have had some notable successes over the past year and hopefully, there are more on the way. The Making it Real ideal of a systemic approach to the involvement of people who use services, is slowly gaining momentum. That's in no small part due to the enthusiasm of the Council's senior leadership for the values of [Making it Real](#).

Experts by Experience have been deeply involved in designing a new direct payments system for Shropshire Council. Founder member of the Making it Real team, Katie Stone has used her hard-learned experience of using the direct payments, to help steer proceedings. And Expert by Experience, Mary Hastings has been co-chairing the new Direct Payments Board meetings with Tania Miles, Assistant Director Adult Social Care and Housing. The group has been successfully developing a new, fairer policy for accessing and using direct payments and this will be put into practice in the coming months. This is a great practical example of how the voice of experience can help form policy and practice. Developments and news can be found in the regular direct payments newsletter available on the [Shropshire Choices website](#).

At a recent Making it Real Board meeting, a number of carers each gave a short and sometimes very moving presentation as part of the Review of Carer's Support Services, on what it was like to be a carer. 135 carers, individually and in groups, were interviewed for the review throughout Shropshire and a further 93 carers completed the online survey. The review was led by Margaret Davies, Shropshire Council's Carers Lead officer and Making it Real meeting attendee, whose draft report and priorities are now available. It's a good read.

The latest issue of the [Local Account](#) has been well-received. I am part of the small editorial team which shapes each issue. Representative stories of ASC work year-round are collected, we then read and prioritise. Our aim is to keep it real and not just pick out the good news stories. In the next Local Account, I would like to include a more general section which focuses on what is happening in ASC around the country and around the world. How do they do things in France and Japan? How is government money allocated to a rural county like Shropshire compared to a big city like Manchester? What is the future of ASC going to look like? I believe that computer technology and artificial intelligence will play a greater part in Social Care and exploring how other communities face these challenges might make fascinating reading. Asking Alexa to cook our loved one's lunch might be a step too far but I am sure she will have a part to play in the future.

We have consulted widely and assembled our 'Guide to being an Expert by Experience' from comments and suggestions we have gathered. This work was done in the MiR Advisory Groups over the course of the year. The booklet we have produced explains what it means to be an 'expert' with Shropshire Council's ASC. It includes a lot of practical information about what to expect if you decide to share your experiences with the Making it Real team and Shropshire Council. We hope it will encourage more people to contribute. The finished guide will be available soon.

In my last report I wrote about our standing invitation to attend the monthly DMT (Director's Management Team) design and innovation meetings. I have been sitting-in at these meetings over the last year and found it interesting and puzzling in equal measure. Interesting because I had no idea about the range and complexity of the topics covered in these meetings and puzzling because, I confess, I sometimes get completely out of my depth in some of the details and acronyms. However, I want to publicly express my thanks to the DMT for the warm welcome I receive at these important meetings and for giving me, a member of the public with limited personal experience of ASC, the opportunity to contribute. What stands out in my mind is the dedication and depth of knowledge that the team collectively uses to tackle this tricky subject, especially under the budgetary pressure that they face on a day-to-day basis. My experience as a carer has enabled me to make a couple of suggestions. For example, I wondered whether it would be possible to arrange the furniture in a care home, for a respite visit or a long-term stay, in a similar layout to what was used to at home. This might save confusion and perhaps reduce the numbers falling at night because the room layout was not as expected. The DM team accepted my suggestion and acted upon it with enthusiasm.

Maintaining the Making it Real Advisory Groups with enthusiastic people and fresh ideas has been difficult, so it may be time to rethink. Stewart came back from a NHS conference on the subject of the NHS People's Academy recently, full of excitement for a similar Social Care Academy based on this NHS model. This would be a way of helping to include people who use services and others in the continued development and improvement of the system. The NHS Academy induction is 4 sessions, run over 4 weeks and includes presentations, behind the scenes visits, demonstrations, activities and opportunities to ask questions of senior Trust staff. This could be a useful way to bring some new faces onto our Advisory Groups, although that wouldn't be a requirement of attending.

Finally, the Front Line! What is happening on the front line of adult social care is all important. We must never forget to listen to the experiences of people who use services and their carers, and use those experiences to shape future development. When say I listen I don't just mean "we'll keep an ear open", I mean seek out, find and listen to those experiences, that's how any improvements will come about. It brings us back to those brilliant 'I' and 'We' statements from TLAP and the importance of identifying what we do well and what we can all do better.

Along with this summary, we have attached our ['Plan on a Page'](#) for the coming year which sets our priorities and gives a really concise overview of our Making it Real project. Plan on a Page is an idea that we borrowed from [PACC](#), it's a really neat way to sum-up what we are trying to do and we are encouraging other boards to use it.

*Keep well, Jon Hancock. March 2020.*