

# Being at the centre



**The new relationship with public services**

# Wales is moving towards a new relationship between members of the public and our public services.

This new relationship puts people, not services or paperwork, at the centre.

It is not about expecting people to take over public services because of cutbacks.

In this new relationship, public services, community members and voluntary organisations will share power, responsibility and a commitment to strengthening communities.

It is about a real shift in power and a willingness to work together as equals.

Some people call this coproduction. It doesn't matter what you call it. What matters is that people, services and organisations begin to share the power, control and responsibility for making Wales stronger and meeting people's needs.

This is very different from the old relationship, where people sat back and waited for public services to sort out our problems. The old relationship had some good points, but people had very little say or control once public services stepped in.

Public services didn't always provide what people wanted, and often what people want can't be provided by a public service anyway.

The sense of community often got weaker as people relied on public services to do what communities once did for themselves.

This new relationship may not always be easy.

- It may be hard for public services to share power and responsibility.
- It may be hard to motivate people to take more responsibility for themselves and those around them.

**However, the rewards of this new relationship are huge.**



## Meet Mrs Jones

She lives alone and doesn't have any family who can help. She needed specialist cancer treatment a long way from home.

She could have picked up the phone to ask the NHS to sort out transport. But she would have had to leave early to suit the patient transport and she would have worried what to do if they didn't turn up, and she didn't look forward to sitting with someone she didn't know when she was already feeling anxious.

It would also have been very expensive to the NHS.

But Mrs Jones had built good relationships in the community. So she asked a friend to take her.

Mrs Jones and her friend chose when to leave, and even allowed time to do a bit of shopping on the way. Her friend was with her throughout, which made the whole experience less terrifying.

And all it cost the NHS was some petrol money.



## ...or what about Mr Williams

He was fed up with constant litter on his street. He phoned the council to sort it out, and they did. But the litter kept being dropped, and his phone calls kept being made, and the council kept sending people round to clear up – and no-one was happy.

A new council worker came in post and contacted Mr Williams to see if he'd be interested in getting neighbours together to apply for a community grant. It turned out that neighbours didn't know each other, but as they started to talk with each other about the community grant, they began to feel more like a community. They started to feel able to ask people to pick up litter when it was dropped, because now they knew their neighbours would back them up.

In time, people stopped dropping litter.

Mr Williams commented:

**'It became a social rule. Once the whole community got the idea, we found people stopped dropping litter'.**

## WCVA has already asked public services to commit to:

- Get round the table as equals with voluntary organisations, individuals and community groups, so people can talk, plan and work together.
- Look at ways to prevent problems happening, or deal with them before they become big problems. This means looking at ways to support community members, community groups, voluntary organisations to do what they do best. It means thinking about different ways to spend money.
- Try out different ways of providing public services, where community members and voluntary organisations can be more involved or take the lead.
- Introduce a new rule that community members and voluntary organisations get to look carefully at any new plans or ideas, to check if they think the plans will work.

## Members of the public will also need to make a commitment to change.

### Are you ready to commit to:

- Look for ways to strengthen your community and work with your public services.
- Contribute your experience, time and skills to work with public services on a new way of planning and providing services.
- Be willing to share responsibility for finding solutions to individual and community problems.
- Be willing to share the power needed for real change – knowing that with power comes responsibility.
- Think about what is best for the community as a whole, not just what is best for you.
- Accept we are all learning a new way of working together; mistakes will happen.

If you are ready to play your part in this new relationship,  
please talk to us about ways to get started.

Contact us at:



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