**Implementer - Interview Notes for eRedBag User Story**

**Name:** Terry Clark

**Role:** Head of Commissioning and Health Integration, London Borough of Sutton

Responsible for all commissioning activity for people-based services, including adult social care, children’s services, public health and housing.

**“The partnership approach has worked particularly well. …I’ve been really impressed, not only with how many different partners have come together – and come together regularly - but also how the various partners have been willing to create task and finish groups and help us collectively to find solutions and overcome hurdles... although the London Borough of Sutton were the lead organisation, I don’t see it as a project led by Sutton. I see it as a multi-partner project that everybody is leading and delivering collectively.”**

**What was your role?**

I am the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) responsible for ensuring the delivery of the eRedBag project across South West London Boroughs. This is a role that I took on in March 2020.

I was also involved in the original paper Red Bag that Sutton created and implemented a few years ago as part of the Vanguard programme.

**What’s worked particularly well?**

The partnership approach has worked particularly well. You can see that from the steering group minutes and notes. I’ve been really impressed, not only with how many different partners have come together – and come together regularly - but also how the various partners have been willing to create task and finish groups and help us collectively to find solutions and overcome hurdles. For example, with Covid we confronted hurdles around reaching our targets for the number of care home residents the project covered. Our partners were really creative around taking on responsibility for different elements. So, although the LB of Sutton were the lead organisation, I don’t see it as a project led by Sutton. I see it as a multi-partner project that everybody is leading and delivering collectively.

**Don’t you need the clear direction and steer of a lead?**

Yes, I think we have that in that we’ve got a Programme Manager, who along with me has provided that clarity. But the way it’s worked is that there have been so many people with ownership who all have ideas and solutions – and that’s really helped to drive the project forward. Especially given it’s such a technical project. We’ve been really lucky in having some really good technical people on board. I’ve had experience on other digital projects which have been dragged out over significant periods of time without necessarily seeing any deliverables. At least with this project we’ve been able to work with our care homes to collectively interpret some of the technical stuff into plain English.

**So, in this respect what has made this project different from others?**

I think it may be because our technical people have been more invested in this project. If I call them ‘commercial’ partners – perhaps that explains – not really in terms of the money – but they are completely invested in the project taking off. It’s not just at the level of an IT manager who may not be completely invested – it goes deeper than that.

**How have you managed to convey the message to care homes that it’s worth battling through some of the necessary information that can appear a bit ‘onerous’ or ‘impenetrable’ – such as the DSPT and DPIA?**

Well, I think some of it can seem quite onerous – the care homes around SW London are primarily SME types (small and medium sized). Whilst we do have some of the larger providers such as Care UK and Sunrise – the majority are ‘owner-manager’ – where there is one owner who manages one or two homes. This really impacts on their ability – they just don’t have the required resource to undertake major new projects and to address IT shortfalls. I think they are all willing – just some are not so able. Taking on significant projects where they have to act at pace can be really difficult for them – and with COVID on top of other challenges – it’s definitely put some spanners in the works in terms of delivery.

We have invested officer time to support them to make changes that they might be struggling with. I think that the ones we have got on board tend to be those who have a couple of homes – we haven’t had a huge amount of success with trying to move on some of the smaller SME care homes because they are primarily paper based. I think these smaller homes really do need a dedicated officer to work with them. They either need funding to backfill the time they need to invest in getting up to speed – or providing an officer who can go in and work with them. I think there may be something around providing – not necessarily a cash incentive to get going – but they may need support in order to be able to transfer their system from a paper system to electronic. In doing this they’ll begin to see some of the benefits of how it may work. There’s a lot of stuff happening at the moment around supporting care homes with their digital maturity. I think probably at the start we could have done some digital maturity assessments. I don’t think we did this – although they may have done something before I came. This would have helped us to target particular homes and know where to put the resource in. It would benefit not only the eRedBag but would assist other projects requiring digital technology such as tele-medicine.

I do wonder if some of the managers in the care homes are of that generation where they haven’t been brought up with the technology in the same way that younger generations have. We need to bear this in mind in our planning – it plays a big part in their willingness to embrace this kind of project and engage.

**What tips would you offer for promoting the eRedBag across the system?**

Following the pressures of the pandemic we have created a newsletter which gets sent out to care homes – just to keep them up to date and abreast of all relevant information – I think this has really helped – and worked for us on a number of different projects. So, over the last 6 months they will have received updates about the eRedBag through this newsletter. What we’ve realised, particularly through Covid, is that our homes are being bombarded with so much information that they’re not always reading it. We’ve been developing different ways of communicating which are more direct. So, at the end of this month (Nov 2020), for example, in Sutton we are launching a new Social Care Hub for care providers which will be aimed at creating a new one stop area for receiving everything they need to know. This is a response to something they’ve said would be really helpful. Hopefully this will be of benefit as we move through the last stage of this project and will help achieve more buy-in. Of course, it’s been more of a struggle due to Covid - it has really got in the way this year!

Whilst Sutton has approximately 79 care homes, approximately 50 of these are LD (Learning Disability) homes – so they’re pretty small. With the eRedBag we’ve focussed on the 29 older people care homes. Most of these are around 30-35 beds – which means there’s a lot more work to do. Locally, in order to try and achieve our target for numbers of residents covered we’ve focussed initially on the larger homes – and now we need to look at the smaller homes so that they aren’t penalised.

**Monitoring and Reviewing Progress**

We’ve been quite on top of this throughout. We’ve got a dedicated programme manager which has really helped us keep on track of all the PM paperwork – such as our ‘highlight reports’. We’ve also been working closely with NHS digital prior to submitting reports to ensure we’ve got it right and that we’re on the same page. Having a dedicated person with the oversight to ensure all necessary material is pulled together has been important. It has enabled the steering group to scrutinise the detail because we have all the relevant information at our fingertips. We have been provided with relevant documents which are informed by the data and lay out a number of options for us to review.

**Lessons and challenges from a broad systems perspective?**

Yes, I think that there have been definite successes in relation to the partnership work – and we’ve done well on the technical side. But there are always challenges. For example, some of the technical specifications have changed throughout the project. I’m not technical myself, but it relates to the way our system links into the hospitals through Connect Your Care. But we’ve managed to adapt, and I suppose this demonstrates the flexibility and versatility of the programme.

Another huge challenge is that people are doing this – getting it up and running – as part of their normal job and particularly in the light of Covid there’s just not much give in the system. People on the ground have found it really hard to find the time.