

---

**PERSONAL BUDGETS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

---

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Veronica Copeland, Adult Services**

**Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People**

---

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the outcome and findings of the Personal Budgets Task and Finish Review Group which was established by the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee to explore and scrutinise how the Council has piloted personal budgets and worked with other Local Authorities to establish best practice.

**Summary**

2. The Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 8th June, 2010, agreed to establish a Task and Finish Review, consisting of all its Members to undertake a review exploring and scrutinising how the Council has piloted personal budgets and worked with other Local Authorities to establish best practice.
3. Members of the Task and Finish Group have done this by :-
  - (a) considering best practice from other Local Authorities across the Country;
  - (b) meeting with people who have tested personal budgets and who currently receive a personal budget in Darlington; and
  - (c) exploring the arrangements for monitoring how people spend their personal budgets and whether money is spent appropriate to need.
4. The Task and Finish Review Group met formally on a number of occasions to undertake its formal investigations and to collate its evidence and compile the final report, which is attached at **Appendix 1**.
5. At its meeting held on 1st February, 2011, the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Task and Finish Review Group's final report and agreed to forward the following recommendations to Cabinet :-
  - (a) That the work undertaken by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Hartlepool Borough Council be noted;

- (b) That the Supported Self Assessment Questionnaire be welcomed as it is felt that it is a good document, the Group is also delighted that Service Users have been involved in drawing up the questionnaire and that help is available from staff to complete the questionnaire;
- (c) That the Group is satisfied there are sufficient monitoring procedures in place to prevent anyone over spending on their personal budgets;
- (d) That there is a robust and well established Validation Panel in operation where applications for personal budgets are deliberated and an agreement is reached;
- (e) That Officers ensure that information is clear, concise and accessible to carers and service users about personal budgets;
- (f) That Officers explore the feasibility of having a dedicated member of staff to carry out reassessments to transfer service users onto personal budgets to improve performance of indicator NI130; and
- (g) That the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee monitor the progress of rolling out personal budgets and receive an update report in six months time.

### **Recommendation**

9. It is recommended that:-

- (a) Cabinet accept all of the recommendations made by the Personal Budgets Task and Finish Review Group.
- (b) Services for People action any outstanding recommendations.

### **Reasons**

10. The recommendations made by the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee will enhance the current model of self directed support.

**Director of People**

### **Background Papers**

Notes of the meeting of the Personal Budgets Task and Finish Review Group

Abbie Metcalfe: Extension 2365

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	This report has implications to address Health and Well Being for the residents of Darlington.
Carbon Impact	There are no direct implications to Carbon Impact which this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no direct implications to Diversity which this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	There is no direct impact on any individual Ward
Groups Affected	This report impacts on people who use personal budgets specifically, but also Darlington residents as a whole.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This links to the Theme 3 "Healthy Darlington". Specifically addressing health inequalities to narrow the gaps in health and well-being and life expectancy.
Efficiency	There are no efficiency identified as part of this work

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

11. The Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Review Group to explore and scrutinise how this Council has piloted personal budgets and worked with other Local Authorities to establish best practice.

### Review Group

12. A wide number of issues have been considered and discussed at the meetings and this final report describes the outcome of the Review Group, summarises the work undertaken, the findings from the processes and the subsequent recommendations.
13. The Personal Budgets Task and Finish Review Group met on several occasions and the Final Report of the Group is attached (**Appendix 1**).
14. The Health and Well being Scrutiny Committee agreed to accept and endorse the following recommendations and to forward to Cabinet for consideration:-
  - (a) That the work undertaken by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Hartlepool Borough Council be noted;
  - (b) That the Supported Self Assessment Questionnaire be welcomed as it is felt that it is a good document, the Group is also delighted that Service Users have been involved in drawing up the questionnaire and that help is available from staff to complete the questionnaire;
  - (c) That the Group is satisfied there are sufficient monitoring procedures in place to prevent anyone over spending on their personal budgets;
  - (d) That there is a robust and well established Validation Panel in operation where applications for personal budgets are deliberated and an agreement is reached;
  - (e) That Officers ensure that information is clear, concise and accessible to carers and service users about personal budgets;
  - (f) That Officers explore the feasibility of having a dedicated member of staff to carryout reassessments to transfer service users onto personal budgets to improve performance of indicator NI130; and
  - (g) That the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee monitor the progress of rolling out personal budgets and receive an update report in six months time.

### Director of People Comments

15. This report and the involvement of Scrutiny in the development of self directed support and the use of personal budgets are welcomed. The implementation of self directed support and the use of personal budgets is one of the key changes within adult social care over the past

twenty years. This report offers endorsement to the model of self directed supported developed locally and, in particular, the way in which it has been co produced with those who currently use adult social care.

16. The Darlington model was developed using existing good practice and is now considered itself a model of good practice, particular in the way in which the model was developed.
17. The recommendations made by the review group are fully supported and actions are underway to ensure that local people are aware of the new model and have the information they need to make effective use of personal budgets and the exploration of the feasibility of a dedicated member of staff to increase the numbers linked to NI130.

## **Appendix 1**

### **PERSONAL BUDGET TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP**

#### **FINAL REPORT**

##### **Introduction**

1. This is the final report of the Personal Budgets Task and Finish Review Group established by the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise how the Council has piloted personal budgets and worked with other Local Authorities to establish best practice.

##### **Background Information**

2. At a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 8th June 2010, Members received a report from the Director of Community Services on the current progress in developing local commissioning strategies in line with the Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy, "Commissioning for Citizenship".
3. The Strategic Commissioning Manager, Learning Disability and Mental Health, presented the report and reminded Members of the Council's challenging change agenda to transform the current model of social care to one that is driven by people directing their own support to meet their own identified social care outcomes. A key element of this transformation involves commissioning, investing and using resources in different ways and to offer clarity a plan has been developed within Adult Social Care commissioning intentions
4. The introduction of personal budgets is enabling people to direct their own support to meet their own identified social care outcomes and Members agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to explore how this Council has piloted personal budgets and what the benefits to individuals are and also give consideration to best practice from other Local Authorities.

##### **Membership of the Review Group**

5. All Members of the Committee were invited to attend each meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

##### **Acknowledgements**

6. The Task and Finish Review Group acknowledges the support and assistance provided in the course of their investigations and would like to place on record its thanks to the following:-

The service users and carers who met with Members;  
Ms. Jeanette Crompton, Project Manager, Business Transformation Team;  
Mr. Mark Humble, Strategic Commissioning Manager, Learning Disability and Mental Health;  
Mrs. Pauline Mitchell, Assistant Director Housing and Adult Social Care; and  
Ms. Abbie Metcalfe, Democratic Support Officer, Darlington Borough Council.

## Methods of Investigation/Findings

7. The Task and Finish Review Group met on five occasions between October and December 2010 and the notes produced following each meeting are attached for information (**Annex 1**).
8. Members considered 'Finding Our Way – The story of Self Directed Support in Barnsley', Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and 'Self-Directed Support in Hartlepool 2006-2009', Hartlepool Borough Council. Both Local Authorities ran pilots and are considered to have Best Practice within this area. The two Councils were supported in their transformation programme by In-Control, a charity which operates as a network equipping people of all ages with the knowledge, power and tools to control their support.
9. The personal budget system in Darlington is based on the In-Control model and elements of a national Resource Allocation System developed to support Local Authorities. The model in Darlington supports an individual to pay for the services or support they need to meet their identified social care needs. They can spend the money in ways that make sense to them as long as they can demonstrate that in doing so they meet their identified social care needs.
10. Individuals complete a supported self assessment questionnaire to identify their support needs, and assistance is provided by Officers to complete the questionnaire. An individual can complete the questionnaire with independent support, however it needs to be verified by a Council Officer. The process is transparent and once the assessment is agreed a monetary sum is identified. There are also Officers at Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) who are available to offer assistance in completing the questionnaire and developing a support plan, as they also provide a support service to people receiving Direct Payments, which is commissioned by the Council.
11. One of the Task and Finish Group meetings took the form of a Focus Group. Officers provided a random selection of individuals and carers who were invited to attend the meeting with elected Members. It provided them with an opportunity to talk freely about their personal budget, the positive and negative aspects; challenges and difficulties experienced (if any) in a confidential forum. This meeting was very well attended and Members took on board all the issues raised.
12. Members did have concerns that some individuals and a number of carers were still confused about personal budgets and there seemed to be a general lack of understanding and awareness of the benefits that personal budgets could bring to individuals. Concerns were expressed about completing the supported self assessment questionnaire as it was felt it was quite a daunting task for individuals. Carers were unaware that they could get support from their Care Managers.
13. Personal budgets can be paid into an individual's specifically created bank account via a direct payment. Officers monitor Direct Payments extremely vigorously and individuals are expected to submit 'returns' on a monthly basis, which is extended to three months, once they get used to system. Once Officers are satisfied that everything is in order the returns timescale is extended further to six monthly and even up to a year. Officers explained that the plan to introduce 'smart cards' will assist with effective monitoring. The smart cards will

enable money to be pre loaded onto the card to allow individuals to spend their Direct Payment directly from the card.

14. A number of examples of the way that personal budgets have been used were shared with Members. One example given was requesting a personal assistant for two hours a week to assist with shopping. The Validation Panel suggested the AgeUK Befriending Service, which has no cost. This was appreciated by the individual. Cleaning services are also popular with those who struggle with household chores, having the flexibility to choose a service provider, request a specific cleaner at a time that suits them, enables individuals more control over their personal life and health care needs.
15. The types of services and support available for individuals are wide ranging and new groups and organisations are evolving to provide the types of services and support people want and choose to pay for, now that individuals are in control of their own budget. A company called 'Ruby Slippers' has been established which is a home care and support service to provide help and support for individuals who are unwell, or for people recovering from an operation and would benefit from a little extra help in the home, or for those who would simply like help and support to regain independence. Officers advised that this company has become very popular with individuals as the company is very flexible.
16. The challenge with personal budgets is encouraging individuals to critically assess their social care needs and consider what small adjustments can be made to their lives that can benefit their health and wellbeing
17. Members are interested in the function of the Validation Panel and the decisions that it makes. Members feel that Care Managers attending the Validation Panel meeting enhances their knowledge and understanding, for when they are assisting in completing the self assessment questionnaire.
18. Personal budgets are being piloted with new referrals into the adult social care system and through the review process. There is a plan for those users currently receiving direct payments to be transferred onto personal budgets following their annual reviews. The aim is that all service users are receiving a personal budget by 2013.

## **Conclusion**

19. Members have concluded that personal budgets do seem to be working and they allow individuals more freedom and more a sense of personal responsibility.
20. Members are keen for personal budgets to be rolled out quickly and that plenty of support is offered to individuals when they transfer from direct payments to personal budgets.
21. Members acknowledged that individuals found completing the supported self assessment questionnaire challenging and a little bit intimidating but feel that Officers have done everything possible to make the incredible complex process straight forward, offering support along the way. Members are sure that once the supported self assessment questionnaire is completed service users and carers will relish the benefits the personal budgets system brings.

## **Recommendations**

22. From the evidence we have been presented with, the Task and Finish Review Group are pleased that a vast amount of work has been undertaken and extended their support and thanks to all the Officers involved, although, we acknowledge that there is still a long way to go. It is to that end that we have formed the following recommendations:
- (a) That the work undertaken by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Hartlepool Borough Council be noted;
  - (b) That the Supported Self Assessment Questionnaire be welcomed as it is felt that it is a good document, the Group is also delighted that Service Users have been involved in drawing up the questionnaire and that help is available from staff to complete the questionnaire;
  - (c) That the Group is satisfied there are sufficient monitoring procedures in place to prevent anyone over spending on their personal budgets;
  - (d) That there is a robust and well established Validation Panel in operation where applications for personal budgets are deliberated and an agreement is reached;
  - (e) That Officers ensure that information is clear, concise and accessible to carers and service users about personal budgets;
  - (f) That Officers explore the feasibility of having a dedicated member of staff to carry out reassessments to transfer service users onto personal budgets to improve performance of indicator NI130; and
  - (g) That the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee monitor the progress of rolling out personal budgets and receive an update report in six months time.

### **Personal Budgets Task and Finish Review Group**

**Personalised Budgets Task and Finish Review Groups**

**Tuesday 19th October 2010 11am**

**Meeting 1**

**Present: - Councillor Swift (Chair), Councillors Nutt, Regan and H Scott.**

**Officers: - Jeanette Crompton, Mark Humble, Abbie Metcalfe and Vikki Patterson.**

Members and Officers discussed and agreed the terms of reference of the Task and Finish Review Group as detailed below:-

To scrutinise how the Council has rolled out personalised budgets and worked with other Local Authorities to establish best practice.

This will be done by:-

- Considering best practice from other Local Authorities across the Country.
- Meeting with people who have tested personal budgets and who currently use personalised budgets in Darlington.
- Exploring the arrangements for monitoring how people spend their personal budgets and whether money is spent appropriate to need.

Members have agreed that this piece of work will be undertaken within six weeks and the final report will be presented to Scrutiny Committee on 7th December 2010 and forwarded to Cabinet for consideration in January 2011.

All Members of the Committee will be invited to attend the Review Group meetings.

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HEALTH AND WELL BEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEES  
PERSONAL BUDGETS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP**

**Review Title**

Personal Budgets Task and Finish Review Group

**Purpose**

To scrutinise how the Council has rolled out personalised budgets and worked with other Local Authorities to establish best practice.

This will be done by:-

- Considering best practice from other Local Authorities across the Country.
- Meeting with people who have tested personal budgets and who currently use personal budgets in Darlington.
- Exploring the arrangements for monitoring the how people spend their personal budgets and whether money is spent appropriate to need.

**Scope**

<b>What action will be taken?</b>	<b>Why?</b>	<b>Action By?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Considering Best Practice from other Local Authorities across the Country – Members will consider evaluation reports from Hartlepool Borough Council and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough	To obtain an understanding of how personal budgets have been rolled out on other Local Authority areas.	Abbie Metcalfe Mark Humble Jeanette Crompton	3rd November 2010

Council.			
Meeting with people who have tested personal budgets and who currently use personal budgets in Darlington – seeking views from individuals who use the personal budgets.	This will allow further understanding of the processes individuals have to go through receive personal budgets and the benefits/difficulties they have encountered.	Individuals in receipt of personal budgets and/or Direct Payments	17th November 2010
Exploring the arrangements for monitoring the how people spend their personal budgets and whether money is spent appropriate to need.	This will provide the Group with assurance that money is being spent wisely and benefiting individuals.	Abbie Metcalfe Mark Humble Jeanette Crompton	1st December 2010

### **Timescale**

The Review will commence in October 2010 and be completed by December 2010.

The final report will be presented to Scrutiny Committee and forwarded to Cabinet for considered in early 2011.

### **Review Group**

All Members of the Committee will be invited to attend the Review Group meetings.

### **Reporting Arrangements**

Progress reports to be submitted to the Monitoring and Co-Ordination Group and Health and Well Bing Scrutiny Committee.

## **Personal Budgets Task and Finish Group**

**3rd November 2010**

### **Meeting 2**

#### **Present:-**

**Councillor Swift (in the Chair); Councillors Freitag, Newall, Regan and H. Scott.**

**Officers: - Jeanette Crompton, Mark Humble and Abbie Metcalfe.**

Officers provided copies of Finding Our Way – The story of Self Directed Support in Barnsley, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Self-Directed Support in Hartlepool 2006-2009, Hartlepool Borough Council. Officers explained that both Local Authorities were considered to have Best Practice within this area.

To support the implementation of self directed support and personal budgets locally officers had written a paper called the “ten essential elements of a transformed social care system” Both Councils were supported in their transformation programme by In Control, a charity which operates as an extensive network equipping people of all ages with the knowledge, power and tools to control their support. The Government Policy ‘Putting People First’ set out the Governments direction in relation to personal budgets and self directed support. Both Barnsley and Hartlepool were individual budget pilots for the Department of Health.

Darlington Borough Council has been offering personal budgets since April 2010 although Direct Payments, a means of deploying a personal budget have been available for a number of years. This was seen to be a good, well established system, which could be built upon on. There is also, a Direct Payment Support Service currently available that has been commissioned from Darlington Association on Disability.

A personal budget is an allocation of social care money given to an individual to enable them to decide on the support they need to meet their needs. This is the amount of money that the Council would have to spend on providing social care for an individual based on their level of need. Individual Budgets are similar but these are made up of money from a variety of funding sources e.g. Supporting People, Disability Living Allowance or Disabled Facilities Grants.

The personal budget system in Darlington is based on the In Control model and elements of a National system developed to support local authorities. The model in Darlington supports an individual to pay for the services they require to meet their care needs. They can spend the money in ways that make sense to them as long as they can demonstrate that in doing so they meet their identified social care needs. The process begins with the completion of a supported self assessment questionnaire in which an individual is supported to identify the support they already have, the outcomes they want to achieve and what additional support they need. The Care Manager then checks and validates the assessment. Once needs are identified an indicative budget is calculated. The individual is then encouraged and offered the support to develop a costed support plan that sets out how needs will be met and the cost of the support required. At this early stage the support plan is presented to a Validation Panel comprised of senior council officers, who agree the plan. The main function of the Validation Panel is to capture the learning in relation to delivering this new model of social care. This learning is used to “tweak” the

system as needed. The validation process has also started to identify those services and methods of support that local people want to purchase.

This is a big culture change for many as it is about ‘thinking outside the box’ and revising the Council’s view of how people should have their social care needs met. For example; supporting someone to purchase a laptop to enable them to do their own weekly shop online, rather than paying someone to take them to a supermarket every week.

Members queried how personal budgets worked for more vulnerable individuals. Officers explained that family carers are able to assist individuals. For those with capacity there are a range of local advocacy services including DAD who can support this process. For those without capacity the Mental Health Capacity Act offers a range of ways in which people can be safeguarded. There are also Best Interest Assessors who can make decisions on behalf on individuals who are not able to. Most Social Care staff who can offer a personal budget have been trained and those who have not will be trained before the end of the year.

As indicated above, individuals (or with the assistance of their carers) complete a supported self assessment questionnaire. There is an online version in development which is straightforward and will produce an indicative amount of money that might be received. Early evidence from the self assessment is that many people are underestimating their care needs and not over estimating.

Currently staff discuss with individuals and, or carers about the types of services/provision they might like to spend their personal budgets on. However plans are in place to expand this to include a range of brokerage options. There is a cultural challenge to change the mind set of staff, individuals and providers in giving responsibility to individuals for their own social care needs. The Local Authority role is to assist in identifying need and look to fill any identified gaps.

Services from home care agencies range in price and if individuals decide that they only want services from a specific supplier and they do not have enough in the personal budget, they could meet the short fall themselves. Some individuals are happy to do this. Officers believe that the majority of individuals are so conscious that the money is not their own, that they are very stringent with it and people pay back what they don’t spend. There is a system in place to claw back unused funds.

Individuals can request their personal budgets as a direct payment and as a result they must have a separate bank account. National evidence would indicate that roughly a quarter of individuals who receive personal budgets manage the money themselves and receive a direct payment with little support, a further quarter receive a personal budget and require some support to manage it, the remaining half want to be treated with dignity and respect and have some choice and control, however are happy for the Council to manage this on their behalf.

Members noted that one particular bank in Darlington, works extremely well with individuals in the town and offers support, carries out home visits and supports people with opening bank accounts. The Direct Payments Support Service also offers ‘managed accounts’ which require two signatories on payments, which work quite well for those who are not able to manage their finances without additional support

Discussion ensued about what is identified as a social care need; whether it is providing respite care for individuals or carers, commissioning older peoples day services for individuals to

regularly attend, buying a season ticket for getting out and about, or give the carer a break and whether personal budgets could be spent on psychiatry/psychology treatments i.e. health services.

Adult Social Care is aiming to provide a 'whole system response' and works closely with independent providers and traditional and not so traditional partners to offer a wider range of services and to extend the 'community offer'. Adult Social Care is transforming services to meet the needs of those who need adult social care. It is evident that the traditional forms of care and support are not as popular as they used to be and therefore other offers need to be available to support people and enable them to remain as independent as possible.

Personal budgets are audited and when individuals begin to receive direct payments they are asked to provide quarterly returns, to enable any problems to be picked up at an early stage. If staff are satisfied that individuals are managing the direct payment well, they are not monitored as frequently. Monitoring is reduced to six monthly and then annually. It is easier for individuals to use agencies rather than employing personal assistants, but it is personal preference and therefore monitoring is proportionate to the services purchased.

Members queried whether the quality of services was monitored by the Council or whether it was simply an individual's choice. Officers advised that if individuals are unhappy with the service they would simply change the provider (vote with their feet). We are a consumer culture and this should be the same for care services, for example if there is a specific home help that delivers a high quality of service individuals are well within their rights to request that person and only that person.

Services purchased by individuals should focus on outcomes and it is these outcomes that are reviewed, not the services. Staff encourage individuals to become more independent and to ask them to identify outcomes they would like to achieve by purchasing services appropriate to meet their needs. For some individuals it is difficult for them to understand the changes, however for others this model encourages them to take responsibility for their own care and support and promotes independence, which ultimately can save money for future reinvestment. People know what works for them and therefore they need to be empowered to make those decisions.

It was explained that personal budgets should be at least cost neutral to roll out and efficiencies are achieved over time, as individuals become more independent, are less reliant on services and slowly their personal budgets should reduce. The drive is around early intervention and prevention to avoid individuals from being in critical need when they require social care services. Small changes to the services individuals will receive can have a small impact but a positive impact on the Council's budget. For example, rather than paying someone to do the shopping for an older person, they could be signposted to Age UK to the Befriending Service and shop together with a new friend.

Depending on the nature of care services required some individuals will need to contribute to their personal budget and there is soon to be a facility online which allows individuals to see how much they would be expected to pay. Work is being undertaken to procure a software package to enable financial assessments and needs assessments to be completed accurately online. The key issue is not everyone has access to the internet, although, Members are keen on encouraging care homes to provide computers with internet access. This issue has been picked up through a Disability Equality Impact Assessment. Then individuals would be able to create their own support plan and set up an account on line to record their personal interests. This will

enable people to establish their own groups i.e. gardening group or something which might trigger interest of providers to make an offer of a service.

Agreed:-

1. That the Officers be thanked for their attendance.
2. That Officers circulate copies of the 10 essential elements of transformation of social care and supported self assessment questionnaire.

## **Personal Budgets Task and Finish Group**

**17th November 2010**

### **Meeting 3**

**Present:-**

**Councillor Newall (in the Chair); Councillors Nutt, Regan and H. Scott.**

**Officers: - Aimee Lax and Abbie Metcalfe.**

**Invited Guests: A number of service users and carers.**

This meeting took the form of a focus group and the guests were invited to share information about their personal budgets in confidence, explaining any difficulties they have experienced and any benefits to using them.

#### **Case Study 1**

Ms A became disabled five years ago and is a single parent.

Following discussions with her Care Manager Ms A began to receive a direct payment which enabled her to be more flexible with the package of care she received. For example, arranging for her cleaner to come at a time which suits her, usually while she is out. Ms A still uses the same agency today, one day a week and they also help her out in the holidays or at short notice, this is easy to arrange as she pays them directly from her direct payment.

Ms A works for a local organisation and was asked to be one of the pilots for personal budgets. Ms A receives the same amount of direct payment as she did previously, but now she has more control of the budget and pays people directly to meet her needs.

Ms A uses Personal Assistants (PA) to take her to school for appointments or assemblies, they also support her to take her children to after-school activities. When Ms A received a direct payment she had to apply every school holiday for assistance, this is no longer an issue as she can plan and arrange school holiday support through her personal budget. She also has the flexibility to change her plans if the weather is poor, to do an outdoor activity and go to the cinema instead.

Ms A is unable to use her personal budget for transport to health appointments but she can ask her PA to take her to appointments. In the past Ms A struggled attending health related appointments as she was unable to find transport and if she could, she often required assistance getting undressed or accessing the correct department. She is now also able to take her children to hospital appointments when she needs to. Ms A says *'personal budgets are the best thing to ever happen to her as they are much more flexible and it enables her to do everything she wants to do.'*

Ms A is concerned about the impact of the budget cuts which could have a devastating affect on lives of those who use personal budgets; that other disabled parents do not have the same flexibility as she does because of her personal budget.

---

## Case Study 2

Mrs B has a daughter with downs syndrome and has two other paid jobs; she also carries out some voluntary work. Mrs B doesn't use any care services. She does have a direct payment and this is mainly used for respite care. Mrs B explained that over the summer the family went on holiday and they used the direct payment to pay for their niece to go on holiday with them to act as a PA for her daughter, which enabled Mr and Mrs B some time on their own and a break. Miss B attends an Art Course at the Arts Centre which is paid for by her direct payment. Mrs B advised that they found the initial process of applying for a direct payment quite intimidating but once they got into it, it was ok.

## Case Study 3

Ms C receives a direct payment and has been closely involved in the development of self directed support in Darlington for the past six years. Ms C explained that due to her disability she has difficulties getting out and has to rely on PA's. She has bought herself a laptop to enable her to do her shopping on line and it helps her keep in touch with the outside world and stops her feeling isolated. Ms C applied to the panel for her laptop but was told no and she had to appeal against their decision. Ms C said that direct payments and personal budgets need to be made much more flexible as people get frustrated going through the process to be told no, especially when told that its your money to spend on whatever meets your needs. Ms C also attends the peer support group who agree there are problems with the flexibility of direct payments.

The meeting had a general discussion about a number of issues as follows:-

### Monitoring arrangements

Some service users have to report back annually, while others report much more regularly. It was noted that when people start with personal budgets they have to send their receipts back on a 12 weekly basis and then gradually monitoring is reduced to six monthly and then to annually. Sending receipts in causes a number of issues as finding and storing the receipts is often a problem. Receipts are required for everything that has been used and or purchased during that period. Members queried whether there was a tolerance level as it appeared strange that there was no miscellaneous category, for people to claim under if they are unable to find receipts. Service users advised that it was a time consuming process to complete their returns, completing monthly was easier, but it was not always possible given individual circumstances. Reporting on an annual basis was easier and not as time consuming particularly if submitting time sheets and regular invoices, if paying a PA. Those present advised that there are strict with their personal budgets/direct payments as they are very conscious that it's their money that needs to be accounted for.

### Rolled out to others

Those service users who use personal budgets advised that personal budgets should be rolled out quite quickly as they are a huge benefit to service users. New referrals to social services are offered personal budgets and others are reviewed annually they are given the opportunity to change to a personal budget. Service users currently using personal budgets encouraged those in the room to attempt the questionnaire and seriously consider the benefits it could bring and begin to think differently about the type of care/support they require.

## Self Assessment Questionnaire

It was acknowledged that completing the Supported Self Assessment Questionnaire was quite a daunting task for service users and carers, but there is support available from Care Managers, Carers or PAs. When completing the self assessment it must be done thoroughly as some service users often underestimate the level of support they require, which is usually picked up by the Care Manager. The process is transparent and a joint decision between the service user/carer with the Care Manager to input into the care package required and ultimately the monetary sum awarded. It was noted that service users were involved in designing the questionnaire and DAD officers have been offering assistance in completing the forms. It was highlighted that more support was needed to assist people completing the forms, from independent sources or organisations. The form does require a different way of thinking and a culture change from service users and carers is very much needed.

## Services Available

DAD is currently collating information about the services that are available for service users to use. It was acknowledged that it could be difficult for service users to move away from the traditional care models if they are unaware of the other services that are available. There needs to be more communications of availability of services such as arts clubs, gardening clubs, coffee mornings, etc.

## Budget implications

All the invited guests expressed concerns about the impending budget cuts and the impact that it would have on their individual circumstances. Discussion ensued regarding the proposal to review the eligibility criteria for social care; whether personal budgets would be reduced as an impact of the proposed budget cuts; there has not been sufficient information communicated about the budget proposals and what they actually mean to those people affected; worried that personal budgets will be taken away completely and so care can't be planned in advance; how do carers voices get heard as part of the budget process; whether a contingency should be retained in case budgets are cut and whether under spends need to be paid back.

## **Agreed:-**

- (a) That everyone be thanked for their attendance at the meeting, and
- (b) That further information be requested from Officers as follows:-
  - Are there tolerance levels for monitoring spending of personal budgets?
  - What are the protocols/guidance for the Panel making decisions on what personal budgets can be used for?
  - Can some examples be provided of the typical applications that are approved?
  - How many applications are declined? And why? Are examples available?

- How are service users expected to know the types of services available that they may wish to purchase with their personal budget?

## Personal Budgets Task And Finish Group

1st December 2010

### Meeting 4

**PRESENT** - Councillor Newall (in the Chair).

**OFFICERS** - Jeanette Crompton, Mark Humble and Abbie Metcalfe.

Following discussions at the last meeting, Members requested further information and clarification on the bullet points, listed below.

- **Are there tolerance levels for monitoring spending of personal budgets? Further details on the monitoring process would be helpful.**

It was explained that Direct Payments are paid into a bank account on a monthly basis. Service users are requested to send in their 'returns' on a monthly basis. A template is provided for service users/carers to follow and every 12 weeks they have to submit their receipts. Officers check the receipts and any issues or concerns are raised with the Care Managers. Once Officers are satisfied that everything is in order the returns timescale is extended to 6 monthly and even up to a year. Some people don't like doing annual returns and prefer more regular monitoring for their own piece of mind and this is agreed. Work is currently underway to explore the use of 'smart cards' for direct payments. The introduction of 'smart cards' will assist with more effective monitoring. The smart cards will enable money to be pre loaded onto the card to allow individuals to spend their personal budget directly from the card. Purchasing care directly from providers will be easier to pay in a similar way as using a debit card. Smart cards statements will be produced which will assist in delivering efficiencies as it will reduce staff time monitoring expenditure. Internal audits have been undertaken on the monitoring system as it presently exists and the risks are being well managed. Surplus payments are usually paid back to Adult Social Care and can be sighted as an efficiency saving. Surplus is monitored and reviewed as part of the annual Care Review with Care Managers and sometimes budgets are adjusted accordingly, if a large surplus has accrued. Service users are required to maintain a contingency fund, for emergencies for example, if their Personal Assistant (PA) is sick or for holiday cover. This tends to work very well, although, there is guidance available for service users in the event of an emergency. When service users commence with a personal budget they enter into a written contract with the Council, similar to that of service providers.

- **What are the protocols/guidance for the Validation Panel making decisions on what personal budgets can be used for? Can members have a copy of the guidance or a set of the Minutes?**

Officers tabled a summary sheet which is filled in by a Care Manager prior to submission to the Validation Panel and then further completed once the Panel has made a decision. The Terms of Reference for the Validation Panel was also shared with Members which included the aims and objectives of the Panel, the scope of responsibility, membership of the Panel, details of the referrals, general information about the meetings, accountability and appeals. Minutes are produced and are used as part of the monitoring arrangements. Officers advised that they would not be that helpful to Members.. The Minutes are used to also record that 'types' of things that

---

people are requesting that are not available due to the gap in the care market, this information is recorded and used to inform service providers and future developments of the care market.

- **Can some examples be provided of the typical applications that are approved?**

Two examples of the ‘types’ of requests the Panel regularly consider were tabled and gave Members an idea of the ‘types’ of requests received. It was noted that some care agencies are not flexible and there appeared to be a gap in the market and recently three new care agencies have come into existence. These new companies are very flexible, and some have been established from personal experiences for example ‘Ruby Slippers’. This proves that the demand is there and the care market is responding to meet the needs of service users. Now that people have their own money to spend they have a right to express a choice and choose a service which meets their individual requirements.

- **How many applications are declined? And why? Are examples available?**

It was explained that applications aren’t simply declined; they are usually deferred for further information. Information is then submitted to the Panel for a decision to be made with all the information present. Usually a lengthy discussion is held, considering whether the request is appropriate to meet the individual’s social care needs and use of personal budget. Examples of applications which have been declined are equipment such as laptops, as there are issues around who owns the piece of equipment, who will pay for any repairs, what would happen if it goes faulty, who pays for the software on laptops, etc. Officers advised that they are seeking legal guidance on such issues. It was noted that funding for assistive technology sits outside the scope of personal budgets, but is still included in Support Plans and funded separately.. Assistive technology can be offered to learning disability service users as well as older people.

- **How are service users expected to know the types of services available that they may wish to purchase with their personal budget?**

The Care Management staff act a brokering service explaining the support available to service users and how they can spend their personal budgets. Care Managers knowledge is expanded by attending the Validation Panel on a rotation basis, to share information. Work is progressing towards developing an electronic Resource Directory of support available to service users. Once this Directory is complete hard copies will also be available. The electronic version of the directory will allow people to click on a service provider and go directly to their individual website, to find out more information. Work is being linked with ‘evolution’ and provisions available from churches. The Access and Contracts Team provide a sign posting service for people who need assistance to find out where services are available. Older carers need to be made aware of the new services and activities that are available. Darlington Association of Disability (DAD) provides a support service to people receiving direct payments and the Council pays for that service. The contract states a set amount of people that can be referred to the service and once that number has been reached the Council are charged an additional £500 per person. The Council is currently discussing with other councils how the service can be procured in the future. Some people will need lots of support at the beginning of the process but will require less as time goes by and ultimately people become more confident and independent. By using support services to assist individuals with direct payments will free up Care Managers time and enable them to carry out more Care Reviews more regularly and effectively.

- **Members would like further clarification of the 4 bands of the eligibility criteria which are being phased out and the associated timescales.**

It was explained that personal budgets are being rolled out both to new service users entering into the adult social care system and through the review process. There is a plan for those users currently receiving direct payments to be transferred onto personal budgets following their annual review. Most people who receive personal budgets receive their payment via a direct payment.

Currently this Council meets community care needs that fall within all four bands of the Fair Access to Care eligibility, where the risk to independence is critical, substantial, moderate or low. Darlington is one of only five Local Authorities across England and Wales who meets need at all four levels..

As part of the current budget proposals work will be undertaken to look at the implications of revising the eligibility criteria. A similar process has been undertaken recently in Stockton. Eligibility criteria should be reviewed every year as part of the budget process. Legally the Local Authority has a duty to offer an assessment to anyone who we believe may have a community care need. As part of the budget proposal services users will be re assessed to determine the risk to independence and, if they are eligible for support they will be offered a personal budget. For those where the risk to independence is lower, they will be signposted to preventative services which will still be in existence or they will have to pay for those services themselves. The Council is however, making a large investment into prevention which will have a huge impact in the future.

- **When will the roll out of personal budgets be complete and will every service user get the opportunity to have a personal budget?**

Personal budgets are continuing to be rolled out to new service users and those having their annual care review. The intention was to have a dedicated member of staff to carry out reassessments to transfer current direct payments service users onto personal budgets but this hasn't been possible and therefore the transfer will happen as part of the annual review. The aim is that all service users will have a personal budget by 2013.

**AGREED** - (a) That the Officers be thanked for the assistance with this work.

(b) That a further meeting be held without Officers present for Members to consider their evidence and draft recommendations.

## **Personal Budgets Task And Finish Group**

**14th December 2010, 2.00pm**

### **Meeting 5**

**PRESENT** - Councillor Swift (in the Chair), Councillors Freitag, Newall and H. Scott.

**OFFICERS** - Pauline Mitchell and Abbie Metcalfe.

Members updated the Assistant Director on their work undertaken and discussed the methods of investigation and their initial conclusions. Taking into account all the information gathered, Members also discussed a number of suggested recommendations which they would like to formulate.

Members concluded that the piece of work had been challenging, although very valuable and hoped that as result of their work service users and carers would benefit.

**AGREED:-** (a) That Officers be thanked for the involvement in this piece of work.

(b) That the following recommendations be included in the Final Report of the Task and Finish Review Group and submitted to Cabinet:-

- (a) That the work undertaken by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Hartlepool Borough Council be noted;
- (b) That the Supported Self Assessment Questionnaire be welcomed as it is felt that it is a good document, the Group is also delighted that Service Users have been involved in drawing up the questionnaire and that help is available from staff to complete the questionnaire;
- (c) That the Group is satisfied there are sufficient monitoring procedures in place to prevent anyone over spending on their personal budgets;
- (d) That there is a robust and well established Validation Panel in operation where applications for personal budgets are deliberated and an agreement is reached;
- (e) That Officers ensure that information is clear, concise and accessible to carers and service users about personal budgets;
- (f) That Officers explore the feasibility of having a dedicated member of staff to carryout reassessments to transfer service users onto personal budgets to improve performance of indicator NI130; and
- (g) That the Health and Well Being Scrutiny Committee monitor the progress of rolling out personal budgets and receive an update report in six months time.