

Self Directed Support / Individual Budgets Frequently Asked Questions

Where do Individual Budgets come from?

'Individual Budgets' were first proposed in the Adult Social Care Green Paper, 'Independence, Well Being and Choice' March 2005 and were also a key element in the Health and Social Care White Paper, 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say; A New Direction for Community Service', published by the DH on 30th January, 2006.

On the 10th December 2007 Secretary of State for Health Rt Hon. Alan Johnson, launching 'Putting People First' described the changes as:

“A major redistribution of power from the State to the Citizen according with the fundamental human right to self-determination. This has the potential to be one of the most radical Public Service reforms for a generation. ...The need for system wide change will cause people to feel anxious and insecure. But, our individual budget pilots, the work of In Control and other initiatives undertaken by individual local authorities have demonstrated that self directed support focussed on the individual leads to better outcomes and a much higher level of user satisfaction.”

What is Self Directed Support?

Self directed support is designed to help people take control of their own social care budgets, manage their own support and choose the services that suit them best using the money from different areas more flexibly. The person is at the centre of the planning process as they are best placed to understand their own needs.

Who can have an Individual Budget?

People who have been assessed as eligible to receive community care services under the Government Fair Access to Care Services Guidelines [FACS], are eligible for public funding and who are willing and agreeable to accessing all the money to which they are entitled.

How do people know if they are eligible under FACS?

People who have support needs themselves or someone on their behalf can contact The Learning Disability Service to ask for an initial assessment of their needs. A meeting will be arranged to assess if you are eligible to receive support from The Learning Disability Service.

What happens if I am not eligible for support from The Learning Disability Service?

You can expect to be given advice about where to get other help.

What happens next if I am eligible?

The Learning Disability Service will need to know what support you need to live the way you choose. You will need to complete a simple form called a Self Directed Support Questionnaire, this is part of the Resource Allocation System [RAS]. You can do this yourself, with help from Social Care or other people who you choose.

The RAS will show what support you need and the amount of money that may be available to meet your needs from The Learning Disability Service. The RAS will also show if you need to claim other benefits if you are eligible to do so.

Will it cost me anything?

You will need to know how much you will have to pay if anything. This is called your 'contribution'. To find out if you have to pay towards your support you will need to have a fairer charging assessment undertaken by the Fairer Charging team.

What happens next?

You will be told in writing by The Learning Disability Service how much money you can spend on meeting your support needs. You will need to make a support plan before any money will be made available for you to use. You can have help to do this and can choose who you would like to help you. This could be a member of The Learning Disability Service, your family, friends or advocate. You can also request help from Penderels. They are an organisation that works to support people on a direct payment.

What is a support plan?

A support plan tells people about you, your support needs. It will show:

- What you will spend the money on; this must be legal.
- How you will stay healthy, safe and well and your independence is promoted.
- How you will organise the support you need and the help you will need to do that.
- How you are planning to live your life now and in the future. Your future plans are also called goals and outcomes.

Once the support plan showing all these things is agreed your money will be paid into a nominated bank account, or you might choose to have your support provided through The Learning Disability Service.

What happens if it is not agreed?

If there are any areas of risk or concerns highlighted in the plan either by yourself or others this will be discussed at the risk enablement panel. The purpose of the risk enablement panel is to discuss, record, and minimise the risk and share the responsibility of the decisions taken. You can attend this panel if you want to. Sometimes the risk panel might make suggestions before the money can be paid.

Do I have to employ support staff?

Not if you don't want to. Whilst many people like the control this gives them, and like the fact that their money will go further as there are no management overheads to pay, others would rather pay more but purchase the support through an independent care agency. Alternatively, you can choose not to receive any of the money at all but can nominate one of more providers who you wish to provide support. (This is called an Individual Service Fund). One of these providers can be the Learning Disability Service.

Who can I employ?

The Individualised Budget is not intended to replace natural support given by families who are already providing support and may be receiving carers allowance or attendance allowance. You may be able to employ someone you already know or you may have to advertise for a personal assistant. Penderells can help you with this.

What is the difference between Individualised Budgets and Direct Payments?

With an Individualised Budget you can choose to have services provided by The Learning Disability Service in addition to employing people directly. You could not do this with direct payments.

Isn't this just person-centred planning by another name?

In Control's model certainly incorporates person-centred planning (PCP) into the process. PCP is the basis for 'in Control's' support plan. But it is evident that if a person has a plan, but they don't have control of their funding and support, and if social care is commissioned and provided as it is now, then that person is unlikely to really be in control of their life.

Where's the money going to come from to pay for self-directed support?

There is no new money for self-directed support. If self-directed support could only happen when large amounts of new funding become available, it is unlikely that it would happen at all. So, the money will come from that which social services are already spending on social care. However, this approach should also help people identify and use other sources of funding (e.g. the Independent Living Fund, benefits, employment, community services, health, education and grants).

How does the Resource Allocation System work?

Councils start by examining how they spend their money at the moment. People with particular needs tend to get certain levels of funding spent on them. These levels are used to make a resource allocation system. Care managers look at the circumstances and needs of a person and decide quickly what level of funding the person is entitled to. The person can then go off and plan knowing how much money that have. If, when they've produced a costed plan, it becomes clear that they need a different level of funding, they can discuss this with the social worker.

What if someone is unable to open a bank account for their funding?

Under the Disability Discrimination Act, it is illegal for banks to refuse to open an account for someone because they have a disability. However, someone must be able to understand what the account is for. If they can't, someone else – a representative or a trust – can open the account or they can have a joint account.

Will it affect benefits?

Receiving money for support does not affect benefits.

If someone works, how does this affect their funding for self-directed support?

The money you get for support is the same if you are working or not working.

What if things don't work out?

You can ask a member of staff from The Learning Disability Service to organise some or all of your support.