

**Re-thinking support
planning: Ideas for an
alternative approach**

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Summary

- 1)** Current models of support planning can be over-professionalised, process-driven, time intensive and costly. They are also often not creative enough or efficient in achieving maximum impact with the available resources.
- 2)** More people need to be supported to develop their own plans, with a broader range of easily accessible 'tools' to help them, and lower cost advice that doesn't always rely on one-to-one professional input.
- 3)** Help for individuals to plan the best use of their resources should be available as a 'universal' offer, incorporating advice to self-funders as well as council-funded people.
- 4)** Support planning tools and resources should be much more accessible using web-based technologies as well as traditional means.
- 5)** User Led Organisations are particularly successful in supporting people to take their personal budget as a direct payment. Such organisations need to be involved in developing new and more sustainable approaches to support planning.
- 6)** The 'sign-off' processes for council personal budgets should be much simpler, and what's required to allocate a personal budget should be communicated to people clearly and up-front.
- 7)** This allocation process should be separated from the offer of 'support to make creative use of resources'. Only by making this distinction can people be supported at their own pace to make the best use of the resources available to them and increase their level of control over time.
- 8)** A detailed support plan is not a pre-requisite for the initial allocation of a personal budget. If the Personal Budget can be allocated with a set of agreed outcomes and a starting 'package', then support planning can happen in an ongoing way once the budget is up and running. Councils will want to assure themselves that a direct payment is being used flexibly to meet agreed outcomes, but this does not mean requiring a detailed support plan in advance that dictates the use of funds.
- 9)** Restricting how people can use personal budgets as a means to achieve savings undermines personalisation and is not an appropriate or effective way to reduce costs.

Introduction.....

This paper reconsiders approaches to support planning that have taken hold as common practice in the giving of Personal Budgets. It is clear that current practices can often be very bureaucratic, as well as offering little in the way of choice and control to individuals. This threatens to prove unsustainable for Councils in the longer term. There is now a pressing need for an efficient approach, which empowers people to make the best of the resources available to them.

The objective therefore is to make support planning available to all those who require it while keeping the process lean and protecting the innovation and flexibility essential for personalisation to thrive.

This paper explores some of the key building blocks of a better model for support planning. In particular, it focuses on two key areas: simplifying allocation and giving people options for support planning which are low cost and use non-professional routes wherever possible.

The trickiest things.....

During 2010-11, councils reported a number of broad issues around support planning. We brought three Councils together (Lancashire, Richmond-upon-Thames and Manchester) who were all quite advanced in their personalisation programmes to see if these issues still resonated when trying to build good support planning¹ at scale. Three areas were identified as the trickiest issues to address:

1) Building a sustainable approach

Developing a mixed economy of support is an important contribution to good support planning. People using services have made it clear they value independent advice from User Led Organisations (ULOs) in particular². There is also good evidence to suggest that external support planning services are better at supporting people to take control of their personal budget.

¹ See appendix 1 for definition of support planning used in this paper.

² For more information on the importance of Independent Support see the following documents:

- Support planning and brokerage with older people and people with mental health difficulties: Helen Sanderson; pub; DOH 2010 www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.uk/_library/Resources/Personalisation/Personalisation_advice/SPB_Final.pdf
- Guidance on Direct Payments: pub; DOH 2009, see paragraph 34 www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_121131.pdf
- SCIE Guide 25 Commissioning to develop and sustain user-led organisations (ULOs) www.scie.org.uk/publications/ataglance/ataglance25.pdf

² Re-thinking support planning: Ideas for an alternative approach

A recent report from the Office for Disability Issues compared approaches to support planning in three authority areas and found that in all three, people supported by the local ULO were much more likely to take a direct payment than those supported by care management staff. In Essex, for example, 100% of those who received assistance from the local User Led Organisation went on to take a direct payment compared with less than half of those who received support from the local authority.³

Many people will need support from a well-trained adviser to take control of the resources available to them to build and maintain informal support and friendships. However, whilst such services are essential for some and need to be developed and maintained, not everyone will need them. Requiring that people always have professional interventions in order to perform what for many can and should be a relatively simple task, is fundamentally disempowering as well as being inefficient and costly. We need to develop an environment where planning is built proportionately around the individual according to what is appropriate and helpful.

Although this critique of how Support Planning currently operates is not new, none of the Authorities we worked with had managed to make significant progress in supporting people to plan themselves. Even where significant efforts had been made to develop a mixed economy of support planning, the percentage of people running this process themselves in our group was as little as 1-2%. This suggests that when authorities are looking to commission external services to support a mixed economy of support planning, what gets commissioned often mirrors the one-to-one model of advice from a professional to a service user.

There appears to have been little work undertaken to identify what the building blocks for an approach to obtaining help, which supported proportionate 'Do it Yourself' support planning would look like. Recent work by Simon Duffy and Kate Fulton⁴ analyzing the functions undertaken by Care Management suggests that it may be possible to save significant Care Management time if people are empowered to take control of planning and organizing their own support. This time can be better used for priority social work activity. In the next section, we propose an approach, that starts to sketch out what such a model might look like.

2) Protecting innovation

Supporting people to be flexible and creative with the resources available to have the maximum impact on meeting needs and improving quality of life, was felt to be a hugely difficult task in the current financial climate. When we considered what the root causes of this issue might be, a network of factors appeared to be at play including:

Shallow cultural change – Where the level of buy-in to the idea of people using budgets in different ways to meet outcomes is low. May be exacerbated in areas where there is a strong tradition of delivering care services.

Difficulty in understanding and communicating how flexibility should be applied within an equitable framework – Where messages about what is permissible are not clearly articulated and people receive mixed messages about what is expected of them.

³ See *Support Planning and Brokerage Project Report Office for Disability Issues May 2011*

⁴ See *Architecture for Personalisation: S. Duffy & K. Fulton; pub; Centre for Welfare reform with Paradigm 2010*
www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.uk/_library/Resources/Personalisation/Personalisation_advice/Good_Practice_in_Support_Planning_and_Brokerage.pdf

Lack of experience or confidence in ways of managing spend which don't seek to restrict how people spend budgets to meet outcomes – Especially difficult, where there is a pressure to achieve savings quickly. It can lead to restrictions beyond what is reasonable and required by the legal framework; and can be made more difficult by a lack of more than anecdotal evidence in the cost-effectiveness of people using money flexibly.

A tendency to professionalize and layer on processes beyond what the legal framework requires – Where care management delivery systems may create new processes and roles to accommodate the shift to Self Directed Support and Personalisation.

To mitigate these risks, it is important to promote transparent debate, build a stronger business case for innovation and find ways to promote and maintain cultural change, highlighting the need for innovation. In the following section, we suggest some approaches which those within and outside of Councils who want to combat these pressures might find useful to have in their armoury.

3) Proportionate and lean process

People told us that defining a lean process is easier than building one, and building one is easier than the constant vigilance required in keeping it lean. One way of guarding against this tendency for processes to pile on the pounds is to be much clearer about what the minimum requirement is for a support plan to be signed off and funding released. We should also consider how much of what we call support planning can be removed entirely from the core care management process. We look at this more in the next section.

Empower and Enable: a different model.....

From the conversations with councils, it was relatively clear that a model for how to enable more people to plan their own support was missing from council's toolkits. Many councils maintain this ambition, not least because it promises greater sustainability along with improvements in choice and control.

A well developed system supporting people to plan and consequently manage their own support also holds the promise of improving the reach to self-funders. Nevertheless, progress in developing such an approach has been painfully slow. One possible reason why this might be so is suggested by Duffy and Fulton in their paper Architecture for Personalisation.

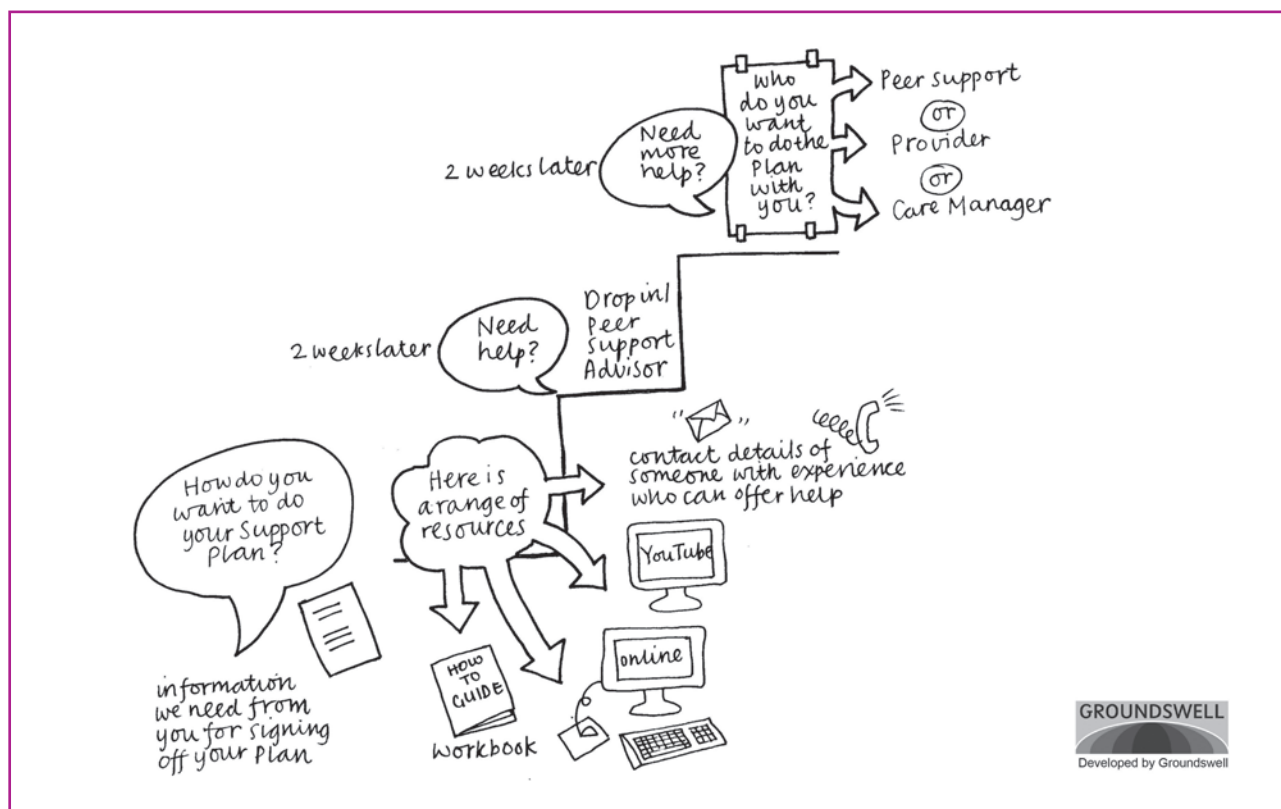
“In fact there is a contradiction between the common experience that personalisation demands more care management time and the fact that its success is based primarily upon people making better use of the skills, energy and knowledge of citizens, families and other community members. One explanatory hypothesis for this contradiction is that we have not yet learnt when and how care managers should do less and empower more.”

The model following suggests how we might begin to find a way around this impasse. It considers support planning as an iterative process, which should be built around what is appropriate for the individual and proposes that options for support planning are staggered to forefront the option for people to do it themselves. It starts by assuming that people can and will make their own plans with the right resources. People are given simple planning tools and encouragement in the first instance and then after a week or so, if more support is needed, it can be offered, linking people together to build confidence.

Depending on how people respond, the level of support can increase but the level and type of support starts from the person and building around them what makes sense and what keeps them at the centre of the process rather than starting with the default being support from a care manager or other paid professional.

Where one-to-one support is offered, it should be delivered in the context of transferring skills and improving people’s confidence to pick up the reins and take control of the process in the future. Whilst this approach may not work for everyone, it has immense value as a default starting point for good conversations about planning, and counters the debilitating assumption that no-one can take on this task without professional help. For those people who clearly need more support, appropriately skilled advice workers should be made available. This may involve the development of services around independent ULOs, or organizations with specialist knowledge and expertise for example charities such as Alzheimer’s or MS Society, as well as support offered directly by councils.

Implications for Councils.....



Empower and enable: A people-led approach to support planning

For councils to adopt this approach, it requires some re-examination of existing processes and a de-coupling of support planning as a process from what is required for a Personal Budget to be allocated. If the Personal Budget can be allocated with a set of agreed outcomes and a starting 'package' of a person's choosing then support planning can happen in an ongoing way once the personal budget is up and running. In this context, support planning is better considered as an essential advisory service, which can be equally valuable to self-funders.

Broadly speaking, the implications for current systems and practice from this approach are similar to the core challenge of Personalisation. It requires a move from an approach where professional interventions are the answer to problems, toward a situation where people are enabled and empowered to take greater control of designing how to use all of the resources available to them to maximum effect. Depending on the local context, it may require a mix of skills:

- Development from existing organisations
- A reworking of existing self directed support processes
- The development of new types of services and products to be commissioned

- A rethinking of communication approaches, and
- The strengthening of local advice networks and specialist advisory services.

For information and advice services, it would be vital that there was an advanced understanding of support planning and the importance of its role in promoting independence. Services need to buy in to the idea that people taking control of planning and managing their support is a positive and appropriate thing to do. It also means that there must be an improvement in the range and quality of tools and technologies available locally for support planning, and that these tools must be simple to use as well as freely accessible.

The model implies that core investment in the development of new approaches to support planning, easily available tools and peer and community support are imperative, but also that they are best seen within an invest to save framework. Figures for 2010 suggest a unit cost for Adult Social Work including overheads of £69 per hour for client-related work, and £213 per hour of face-to-face contact.⁵ Where planning activity currently represents a significant proportion of social work investment, reducing the level of social work engagement in this area makes obvious financial sense.

From a local policy perspective, if we want to empower more people to plan their own support, then the messages people receive about what is possible and permissible need to be clearer and better communicated. If people receive mixed messages about what is possible to spend money on, and if the plans they create are inspected in detail it is highly unlikely people will bother to take on the process.

This in turn suggests that people developing their own support plans is not compatible with the practice of scrutinising plans in detail to check for compliance. We think there are ways around this dilemma. In Manchester, the 'Right to Control' (national pilot) sites have adopted a summary sign off sheet which is used to sign off the support plan. This approach supports the idea that the plan belongs to the person whilst still capturing the key data needed to ensure the plan is legal and likely to be effective.

As financial pressures increase, tensions within councils can make it very difficult to maintain an approach where the detail of plans is not scrutinised. However there is some evidence to suggest that talking a more proportionate approach to monitoring the detail of direct payment expenditure can also create significant cashable savings as well as protecting the spirit of personalisation. Following a project aimed at rationalising the management of risk in relation to Direct Payment users and developing more proportionate monitoring arrangements – an approach recommended by CIPFA – Lincolnshire reported cashable savings of £130,000 in the following year.⁶

Another way of ensuring people get clear and consistent messages that support people to innovative and creative in their use of budgets is by ensuring there are good and consistent public messages supporting the desired approach. Manchester have taken this challenge seriously and co-produced a 12 point best practice guide to Support Planning with local people.⁷ In the face of significant cuts, Manchester are developing a publicity campaign to draw attention to this work and help them stay focused on their commitment to enabling choice and control.

⁵ *Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2010: compiled by Lesley Curtis; pub Personal Social Services Research Unit 2010*
www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/uc/uc2010/uc2010.pdf

⁶ *Practical approaches to improving productivity through personalisation in adult social care; R.Ayling & M. Cattermole; pub PPF Consortium 2010*
http://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.uk/_library/Practical_Approaches_doc.pdf

⁷ *Best practice Support Planning in Manchester: pub; Manchester City Council and HAS 2010*
www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=415596718814&set=a.135198068814.108618.112009273814&theater

Keeping it lean

People told us that designing, and more crucially maintaining, lean processes was an uphill struggle requiring sustained vigilance. To address this concern, the Think Local Act Personal Partnership has published a companion paper *Adult Social Care Minimum Process*. This offers a best practice lean operating model for personalisation to illustrate what the fundamental requirements are for a care management system.

This paper helpfully situates support planning as a universal advisory service emphasizing the need to separate the information required to allocate a personal budget (a discrete set of information) from support planning as an iterative process which people may find useful in making creative use of resources and which can happen over a longer timeframe than that required by statutory assessment. This distinction is critical to developing better support planning.

The idea that allocation processes can be minimized in such a way to allow good support planning to happen as a parallel process to the giving of a personal budget, and which does not need to be completed in order for a direct payment to start, is quite lawful.

On the basis that an individual is (assessed as) eligible for, and agrees to the amount of their allocated direct payment, and also to the associated outcomes, a final support or care plan (a 'plan') specifying minute detail is not a pre-requisite to the initial allocation of a direct payment – allowing the person to start to spend. Outcomes should have been agreed and set out in writing, and there should be consensus that reasonable resources have been offered to meet the eligible assessed needs and that the individual concerned understands their obligations in taking

a direct payment. They should have signed the associated document confirming this. Any required 'checking' on use of the funds to meet outcomes can then be done at review, or earlier if requested by the direct payment recipient, and any detailed information about spend can be required at that stage should concerns about specific usage arise. This does not imply that people should not be supported to plan the detail of how to use their direct payment where they want and need it but rather that they should not be unduly delayed and constrained by the process of allocating resources.

For people taking managed personal budgets, a plan will need to be produced by default in order for services to be commissioned. What is important in this case is that the process of support planning is still part of a core universal offer from social services and is focused on enabling and empowering people to learn from experience about what works best for them and how to adapt and use resources over time in order to get the maximum benefits for the individual.

In addition, it will be important to ensure that the information, which is drawn across into the sign off process, remains proportionate and appropriate.

For both direct payment and managed personal budget recipients, the focus of attention in allocating a budget should be on mapping the use of resources to meet outcomes and in keeping the sign off process streamlined and separate from the offer of support to make the best use of resources.

There will of course be other reasons driving the collection of information in support planning, but not all information collected may be truly necessary to collect. Asking these questions of processes is a necessary discipline to guard against processes becoming bureaucratic. Councils may therefore wish to check periodically what assumptions lay behind processes associated with support planning and the data being collected and whether these assumptions stand up to scrutiny.

'The Right To Control' (Trailblazer) pilot sites have been grappling with these issues for some time and an example of a summary sign off sheet from their work is included in Appendix 2.

Conclusion.....

Creating the conditions for the approach to support planning outlined here is not likely to be either quick or easy. Low levels of investment in external support planning and the extremely small numbers of people currently undertaking their own planning bears testament to that.

However the acute financial pressures we are experiencing are making the need for a sustainable model of support planning even more pressing. Lean systems can only provide part of the answer to this dilemma. Building a model, which is truly fit for purpose, requires a step change towards empowering people to take greater control of the planning process and a strong commitment to continue to nurture the freedoms and flexibilities, which make Personalisation meaningful.



Appendix 1: Defining Support Planning

In undertaking this piece of work we made use of other parallel work on Support planning and Brokerage most notably that undertaken by the London Joint Improvement Partnership (JIP) Special Interest Group on Support Planning in 2010-2011. The London JIP paper 'Practical approaches to commissioning Support Planning and Brokerage' makes the point that Support Brokerage is very broadly defined ...

'Crossing into all areas of the operating model and may make it difficult for Local Authorities to commission the functions particularly needed in their locality.'

For this reason, this paper concentrates on the more discreet area of support planning and shares the definition for this with the London JIP as:

'The process by which a person develops a plan of the support they need ... and how they intend to meet individual goals within available resources'.



Appendix 2: Right to Control Routefinder. Short Support Plan Record

Summary Information about my Support Plan

There are some things that the Right to Control Regulations say have to be in a Support Plan. If you like, you can use this section as your own Support Plan, or you can write your own, but the Right to Control Authorities will need to either complete this section, or will use their own forms to make sure all the information is written down.

The Office for Disability Issues want to contact some people who have the Right to Control to find out how it worked, and to learn about how things can be improved in the future. They may use your contact details if they would like to talk to you about your experience of the Right to Control.

About Me

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

My Disability (e.g. Physical Disability/Learning Disability, Sensory Impairment, Mental Health/Other):

About My Support Plan

I have asked to use the Right to Control to:

- Take a Direct Payment Use an Existing Service

The RTC Funding Streams I receive support from are:

- Social Care Disabled Facilities Grant

This form relates to the payments being made by (funding stream):

The amount to be paid is (per week/one-off):

My personal contribution is (per week/one-off):

How My Outcomes will be achieved:

Outcome:	Details of Support to be provided:	Cost:

How My Support Plan will be reviewed

Who will arrange the review? Who needs to be involved? Are there any particular arrangements that are needed?

Are there any Risks to Me or to Other People?

Describe any risks that have been discussed about any parts of your support plan, and how you have agreed that those risks will be managed:

Direct Payment Details

If you will receive a Direct Payment for any part of your Support Plan, the details of the Direct Payment will be recorded here:

Disabled Facilities Grants

If this Support Plan is for a Disabled Facilities Grant Payment, the following information is also needed:

Who is the Contractor, and how will the works be carried out?

Who will the grant be paid to?

If the Grant is to be paid in instalments, how will these be arranged?

What purpose/outcomes are the works intended to achieve?

The Right to Control CIL have kept a copy of my Support Plan Record Yes / No

The last time any changes were made to my Support Plan Record was on this date.

Other people who have a copy of my Support Plan Record are:

For the most up to date information about my Support Plan, the best person or organisation to ask is:

Organisation Reference Number

CIL Number:

Sometimes it is useful for organisations working with you to give you a number, so they can easily find your details again. They may record your number here:

Organisation:

Number:

Organisation Providing Funding

Someone from the organisation providing funding for your support plan should sign to say that they agree with it.

Organisation:

Name:

Signature:

Signed:

Date:

Design: www.foundationdesign.co.uk

Think Local, Act Personal is a sector-wide commitment to moving forward with personalisation and community-based support, endorsed by organisations comprising representatives from across the social care sector including local government, health, private, independent and community organisations. For a full list of partners visit www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk