

Micro commissioning

Introduction

Complicated processes and bureaucracy have a significant impact on people's experience of having a personal budget. The Third National Personal Budget Survey published by TLAP in October 2014, shows that people with personal budgets are nearly three times more likely to report better outcomes if they find the process easy.

Local authority back office commissioning, invoicing and payment arrangements are just one process area where there is an opportunity to do things in a more efficient, effective, and ultimately 'leaner' way.

Furthermore the Care Act places substantial responsibility on local authorities to ensure a vibrant and responsive marketplace that focuses on meeting people's outcomes, ensuring wellbeing and the delivery of quality, innovative services - and value for money.

Background

"Key to our approach is working in equal partnership with people who need social care services so that we understand their needs and wishes and can enable them to find the support services that they want and ensure services are designed around individual need."

Dianne Green, Head of Wellbeing and Early Intervention, Kirklees Council

Kirklees Council is experiencing increasing pressures on the way it supports people with learning disabilities. People's needs are becoming more complex and their care packages becoming larger. There are also a number of gaps in the current market in relation to supply and ability to satisfy needs accordingly.

They identified some individuals with learning difficulties with complex packages of care. Kirklees Council has a small number of potential providers on their contracted framework and usual practice would mean the social worker or commissioner would contact each provider and enter into negotiations on the service provision and cost. This is not only a lengthy and time consuming process, with a significant impact on back-office resources, but it also limits the choice of the individual to the contracted providers. The process also doesn't lend itself easily to encouraging providers to propose personalised solutions tailored to an individual's needs and the outcomes identified in their support plan – or to provide best value for money.

The solution

Kirklees Council is one of 14 local authorities across Yorkshire and Humber that developed the web-based Connect to Support platform.

Connect to Support

Connect to Support is used by people with care and support needs, providers, brokers and statutory services. It can be configured to meet the many challenges presented by the personalisation agenda, including the provision of information and advice, assessments and screening, transactional eMarketplaces, personal budget management, brokerage, care accounts, personal health budgets and the Local Offer for special educational needs and/or disability (SEND).

Connect to Support utilises the award-winning PCG Care Solutions platform. Born out of the acquisition of shop4support in 2014, PCG Care Solutions offers a comprehensive range of solutions covering all areas of the personalisation agenda across adult social care, children's and education services and health.

Building on the Connect to Support platform and its existing functionality, the local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber have developed a 'Micro Commissioning' module that enables any party to quickly and easily outline an individual's care and support needs and agreed outcomes via a web-based system. They are then able to submit this to multiple providers simultaneously who respond with a proposal and indicative costs within a given timescale. All interested parties can then review the provider submissions and quotations and go on to manage the whole transaction process including appointing the preferred supplier(s), submitting the order, processing payment and monitoring that package of care. This end-to-end solution is accessible by all parties (individual, provider, budget manager and local authority), providing total transparency and a full audit trail that eliminates duplication. Visit <https://www.connecttosupport.org/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pagelid=901> to see how the module works.

"This approach enables the individual to meet their support needs in a more efficient, effective and personalised way. It shifts much of the administrative burden away from us, creating a 'mini-competition' amongst providers encouraging them to be more creative and tailor their responses towards an individual's needs as well as pricing the package competitively.

Dianne Green, Head of Wellbeing and Early Intervention, Kirklees Council

The benefits

Flexible	The module can be used by an individual with care and support needs, including self-funders, or someone working on their behalf i.e. the local authority, third party broker, or other external organisation. It also works for direct payments, managed budgets and individual service funds (ISFs).
Choice and control	The person with care and support needs can be involved throughout the process, commissioning in a co-produced way.
Personalised and outcome-focused	It is ideal for bespoke and complex packages as the user is able to provide a good level of detail about the needs of the person needing care and support.
Efficient	Through the system, users can send 'service requests' simultaneously to self-selected providers, saving time and resource and the whole process from commissioning through to contract management, invoicing and review is managed via a web-based system.
Market shaping	Drives competition between providers on quality of outcome and wellbeing-focused services, innovation and price.

"We are still in the early stages of implementing this however we have already started to see innovative and person-focused support packages being created at a lower cost and without so much effort . A full evaluation of the system will take place in due course."

Dianne Green, Head of Wellbeing and Early Intervention, Kirklees Council