## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Where are we now?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The current personal budget delivery picture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving forward with personal budgets – addressing some of the challenges of implementation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Reducing unnecessary process and restrictions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Equality of access</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Providing good information about personal budgets and how they can be used</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Direct payments and managed personal budgets</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Market and provider development</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What next?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful documents and further reading</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This paper was Prepared by Martin Routledge and Jaimee Lewis for the Think Local, Act Personal Partnership, with thanks to Sarah Carr from the Social Care Institute for Excellence for her assistance. For further information, visit [www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk) or email thinklocalactpersonal@scie.org.uk

Please note that that we refer to a number publications throughout this document that are published online. For ease of use, we have shortened the web addresses of these documents using the web site [www.bit.ly](http://www.bit.ly).
Summary

This paper provides an overview of the latest evidence – giving the clearest picture yet of how the sector is progressing with the delivery of personal budgets. There has been some important progress made, with encouraging evidence showing improved outcomes for people. However, research also suggests action is needed in a number of key areas, including:

- access to direct payments
- ensuring authenticity in council managed personal budgets
- better information and advice
- improving equality of access
- reducing unnecessary process and increasing flexibility.

Action in these areas will allow the sector to deliver on the promise of personal budgets and the Think Local, Act Personal Partnership will support the sector to work on this.

As an immediate first step, this paper points to where to go for further information to help address some of the challenges that have been identified and lists a number of useful documents for further reading.
Introduction: Where are we now?

We are now three and a half years on from the introduction of personal budgets into English social care policy. Given the expectations of the Vision for Social Care and the goals of the Think Local, Act Personal partnership agreement, it is now helpful to take stock and learn lessons from progress to date.

Personal budgets are an important element in the personalisation of adult social care but not the only one, and on their own, they cannot be expected to solve all the problems of the current system. Think Local, Act Personal stresses the necessary combination of community-based universal approaches designed for all and targeted support for particular groups. It is also focused on the need to secure a good choice of high quality local support and to develop community capacity, as set out in Practical Approaches to Building Community Capacity (http://bit.ly/qahMtc). The Law Commission’s proposals for modernising community care law (http://bit.ly/oqPPPa) and Dilnot’s report on funding options Fairer Care Funding (http://bit.ly/hOqCJJ) are also clearly crucial as we head towards the forthcoming White Paper in 2012.

Personal budget delivery should now be mainstream business in councils’ delivery of social care. From April 2011, every person starting to receive ongoing council funded support should have been receiving this via a personal budget, and by April 2013, all people receiving such funded support are expected to have a personal budget.

Several pieces of the “information jigsaw” have recently become available to give us the clearest picture yet of how we are progressing with implementing personal budgets:

- The National Personal Budgets Survey (POET) of over 2000 personal budget users and carers’ self-reported outcomes and experiences (http://bit.ly/klyDNh)
- The reports from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) on learning from the personal budget experiences of older people and people with mental health problems (http://bit.ly/3VzKO8) and on personalisation, productivity and efficiency (http://bit.ly/iLWR8i).
- The National Audit Office report on oversight of user choice and provider competition in care markets, supplemented by the Ipsos MORI report which examined the experiences of users of personal budgets in adult social care (http://bit.ly/n8Hma9).

In addition, we have seen the annual Community Care/Unison survey of social care practitioners’ views on the progress of personalisation (http://bit.ly/lHGVDM) and the emerging findings from a three-year longitudinal study from Essex (http://bit.ly/likHRW). Last but certainly not least are the report of the Joseph Rowntree Standards We Expect user-led project (http://bit.ly/km10Py) and findings from the Office for Disability Issues research into support planning and brokerage (http://bit.ly/r3bGZK).

Personal Budgets: Taking Stock, Moving Forward
Put together, these sources provide a good overview of how we are progressing, where the successes have been and point to where improvements need to be made. Both people who use social care and carers are reporting a range of positive outcomes when given more choice and control through self-directed support and personal budgets. There can now be no doubt that, for most people receiving them, personal budgets make a positive difference in important areas of their lives. This is especially true when people can exercise genuine choice and control over their care and are provided with the right information, advice and support.

However, continuing and urgent action is needed to ensure consistency in the approach to the offer of personal budgets – wherever a person lives and whatever their needs. This means ensuring direct payments are fully available, that anyone taking a “council managed” personal budget has real choice and control and the streamlining of expensive and restrictive processes to improve experience and efficiency.

There is an emerging consensus about the importance of the quality of relationships and communication between people and social care staff and how this can be developed through training and information sharing. In addition, the research to date shows there is much work still to be done on developing local provider markets, including small voluntary and community sector bodies, user-led organisations and social enterprises. Culture change and organisational transformation towards person-centredness is inevitably at this stage still a work in progress for councils and providers.

The current situation is very challenging, given significant financial pressures. However, this makes effective delivery of personal budgets even more important – use of resources must be optimised to improve outcomes, efficiency, choice and control.

The current personal budget delivery picture

Numbers of personal budgets

Overall numbers

The most recent Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) survey reports that the total number of personal budgets delivered by councils across England has doubled in the last year. Over 338,000 people had a personal budget at the end of March 2011 with about half going to older people. This means that about a third of the approximately one million people supported by councils on a week-by-week basis now receive a personal budget and the total amount of money allocated overall is projected to have passed £1.5 billion. This represents almost £1 in every £7 spent by councils directly on care and support services. A fifth of personal budgets have a value of less than £1k per year but a quarter are now for £10k or more.

Progress across councils, however, remains very variable. While a majority of councils are now delivering personal budgets to a third or more of their regular users, the situation remains that a significant minority of councils at the time of the survey were delivering personal budgets to less than a fifth of potentially eligible users.
Direct payments and council managed personal budgets

Personal budgets can be taken as direct payments or via council managed options. It is important to remember however that these two basic options can further include a range of choices within them, including different ways people can be helped to manage a direct payment and Individual Service Funds held by providers on behalf of their users. Crucial to the extension of individual control is that whichever option is chosen, councils are delivering according to the core principles of self-directed support. In the ADASS survey, 26% of personal budgets are delivered as direct payments, 67% as managed personal budgets and 7% as a mixture. It is noteworthy that in the last year, nearly all of the increase has been in ‘managed’ personal budgets, with no significant increase in direct payment numbers. However, whilst only a third are delivered via a direct payment, almost half of all personal budget funding is offered via this route, suggesting that the people with larger budgets may be choosing direct payments as their preferred delivery method.

What do these numbers tell us?

The government’s 30% target for 2011 has been reached – on average – but a significant minority are not near this and this has been persistent through all the ADASS surveys. Over the three years of the Putting People First programme (which ran from April 2008 to March 2011), direct payments have increased significantly but not in the last six months when managed personal budgets made up the big increase.

Both these facts highlight significant issues in respect of reaching the 100% target by 2013, with direct payments making up a major portion. However, this also shows that some concerns expressed that people are being pressurised into taking direct payments against their will appear groundless.

In fact, the trend is the other way, towards more managed personal budgets. There is also significant uncertainty whether such managed budgets are always offered in a way that affords suitable choice and control to the recipient, despite the advice set out by the former Putting People First consortium (http://bit.ly/kbXWZg) and the policy intention of Government.

KEY FACTS:
1) Direct payments have increased significantly but the most recent trend has been managed personal budgets.
2) There are significant issues in reaching the 100% personal budget target by 2013, with direct payments being a major portion.
3) There is uncertainty whether managed personal budgets are always offered in a way that affords suitable choice and control to the recipient.

Outcomes for people

Over 2,000 personal budget holders and carers completed the National Personal Budget Survey using the Personal Budgets Outcomes Evaluation Tool (POET), making this the biggest survey to date. This work was undertaken for the Think Local, Act Personal Partnership by In Control and Lancaster University. Nearly half of the personal budget holders surveyed were over 65. The survey provides a detailed and rich picture of outcomes and experiences as reported by people themselves. As well as answering specific questions, people had the chance to give their personal views about outcomes and experiences. Very recently, the Ipsos MORI survey carried out for the National Audit Office included 48 face-to-face interviews with personal budget holders and/or their carers. These two surveys have notably consistent findings about outcomes and experiences.
In summary, the POET survey finds:

"...it seems that personal budgets are likely to have generally positive impacts on the lives of all groups of personal budget holders and the people who care for them. The likelihood of people experiencing a positive impact from a personal budget is maximised by a personal budget support process that keeps people fully informed, puts people in control of the personal budget and how it is spent, supports people without undue constraint and bureaucracy, and fully involves carers. Under these conditions, personal budgets can and do work well for everyone".

Some of the other headlines from the POET survey regarding personal budget holders include:

- Most personal budget holders reported that the main components of self-directed support were in place, including being told the amount of their personal budget, getting help to plan and having their views included in the support plan.
- Most personal budget holders reported a positive impact on most aspects of their lives surveyed, including being supported with dignity and respect; staying as independent as they want to be; being in control of their support; and getting the support they need when they need it. In the other aspects of people’s lives, most personal budget holders reported a neutral – not negative – impact. Overall, only very small numbers of people reported personal budgets having a negative impact on any of the aspects of their lives, as asked about in the survey.
- In the written responses submitted as part of the survey, people commented that they were generally very positive about the impact of personal budgets on their lives, although they also expressed clear concerns about the money available for their support.

Headlines relating to carers include:

- Most carers of personal budget holders also reported positive experiences (to a lesser extent than the holders themselves).
- Most reported that their views were well included in the personal budget holder's support plan.
- Most reported a positive impact of the personal budgets on three key aspects of their own lives as carers: support for them to continue caring; their quality of life; and their physical and mental wellbeing.
- For the other areas asked about, carers were evenly split on whether personal budgets for the person they care for had had a positive impact or made no difference. Most reported no impact on their own capacity to get and keep a paid job. Only small minorities reported any areas of their lives getting worse.
- In written comments for the survey, carers were highly positive about the impact of personal budgets on the lives of the personal budget holder, themselves as carers and other family members.

The National Audit Office Ipsos MORI research showed that:

- People who had previously experienced traditional care packages and then moved to a personal budget reported positive change.
- The key areas of positive impact were increased control over care and support; increased satisfaction with care and support and increased amount of support.
- An example of a negative impact of having a personal budget was the ‘stress, upset and confusion’ caused by inadvertent misuse of funds and problems with employing and managing personal assistants.
Carers reported mostly positive impacts, including getting a break from their caring activities and peace of mind. However a few were worried about the increased burden of managing a budget where the holder could not do so for themselves.

**Different experiences**

Importantly, both the POET survey and the National Audit Office research revealed markedly different outcomes across councils, with different processes across councils having a significant positive or negative impact.

The POET survey found that:

- Those managing the budget themselves as a direct payment reported significantly more positive outcomes than people receiving council managed budgets.
- People who did not know how their personal budget was managed or did not know the amount of their personal budget reported less positive outcomes (older people were less likely to know).
- People who felt their views were more fully included in the support plan were more likely to report positive outcomes across the board.
- People who had been using their personal budgets for longer reported increasingly positive outcomes.
- A greater weekly amount of personal budget support was associated with more positive outcomes.

Similarly, the National Audit Office research showed:

- Not all the personal budget holders were offered a choice between a direct payment and a personal budget. Where there was a choice, managed personal budgets were chosen when the benefits of a direct payment appeared to be outweighed by the work and responsibility involved in managing the money.
- Although personal budgets are designed to give greater choice of care and support, day centres were still frequently used, as were visits from home care staff, particularly for those who had a managed budget.
- People who had direct payments were more likely to use their budget in creative ways.
- Managed budget holders were not generally aware that they could choose providers and were not always offered a choice.
- Support to manage and change providers was vital for all budget holders to exercise choice, but it was not always available or of the right quality.
- Awareness of the responsibilities and risks of using a direct payment to employ personal assistants was mixed.

These findings were reflected in the in-depth SCIE research. This provides detailed evidence to inform good practice in personal budget processes for people with mental health problems and older people, including the following key points:

- That although some people had positive experiences of the personal budgets process, there was significant room for improvement, particularly around people having suitable information, advice and support to exercise choice and control and having access to a practitioner with whom they could build a trusting relationship.
Carers can have a central role in enabling people with dementia or mental health problems take up and manage their personal budget.

There was concern that older people were sometimes steered away from direct payments and towards managed personal budgets or commissioned services. Personal budget holders emphasised the importance of ensuring people made informed decisions about which option would work best for them and what support was needed to make it work.

**Process and experience**

There are common views and concerns from the recent research, including the Community Care/UNISON social care practitioner survey, the National Audit Office research and the POET and SCIE findings in respect of personal budget processes. POET showed personal budget holders varied widely in their experiences of the process, but many reported difficulties at each stage. Comments from carers were also often negative about all aspects of the process.

The biggest concerns raised by respondents in the POET survey were:

- It not being easy to: get information and advice, get needs assessed, understand what a personal budget could be spent on, be in control of what the budget was spent on, and plan and manage the person’s support.

- Overall, less than half felt that the council had made it easy or very easy for people to change their support, choose the best option from a range of services, or voice their opinions or complain.

- Overall, substantial numbers of people (between 13% and 24%) reported that councils had made it difficult or very difficult in each aspect of the personal budget process.

Again, however, there was substantial variation across councils in perceptions of how easy or difficult all aspects of the personal budget process were.

The National Audit Office research also found distinctive variations in process between the local authorities studied:

- A significant proportion of personal budget holders found choosing and purchasing care and support difficult. Only around half said their local authority had made it ‘easy’ to get the right information and advice to do so.

- Just under a third of people using direct payments were having difficulty in finding the right support to become an employer.

- The proportion of personal budget holders offered help to plan support by their local authority ranged from 38 to 85 per cent, a very wide variation.

- Most people’s experience of monitoring and review focused on financial auditing, but their understanding of the process and its frequency varied across local authorities.

- Personal budget holders from a local authority which had been part of an original personal budget pilot were more likely to be satisfied than those in authorities that had not taken part in a pilot (http://bit.ly/n8Hma9).
Finally, research carried out by the Office for Disability Issues on support planning reported that:

- ‘Support planning was experienced by service users as more ‘human’ when delivered by a user-led organisation than by a local authority, with less bureaucracy involved’.
- ‘People whose support plan was facilitated by a user-led organisation were more likely to take their personal budget as a direct payment than those whose support plan was delivered by the local authority’.


What does this research about people’s experiences of personal budgets tell us?

Those studies looking at outcomes tell us that the great majority of people see themselves benefiting significantly through having a personal budget and that this applies to all groups, though there remain clear differences of degree, particularly for older people and people with mental health problems.

There are clear differences across councils, suggesting some are achieving greater progress on providing greater choice and control and improving people’s chosen outcomes. Some of the research suggests that the outcomes benefits are being gained despite processes and restrictions that people are finding very frustrating and stressful. Again, the picture seems to vary significantly across councils.

The POET survey and National Audit Office research showed that those taking their personal budget as a direct payment were achieving better outcomes and could exercise more choice and plan their support more creatively.

This suggests that where people are using a managed personal budget, there is clearly work to be done to make sure these offer real choice and control and improve outcomes. Having made this point, there is clearly also variation in direct payment delivery practice across councils which requires equal attention. Significantly, research is showing the importance of user-led organisations in facilitating direct payment uptake and effective, efficient support planning.

Some groups are clearly getting better outcomes than others and more needs to be done to improve outcomes for all. The SCIE research shows that if appropriate information, advice and support is available (including peer support from experienced personal budget users) and there is sufficient flexibility and creativity in support planning, personal budgets can work very well for people with mental health problems and older people. Increasing attention is also needed to people who lack capacity. Forthcoming research and advice from the Alzheimer’s Society will explore the experiences of people with dementia and offer advice on improving access and benefits to this group.

The research findings suggest that some groups continue to have problems accessing personal budgets. The importance of promoting personal budgets and access through suitable information, including through trained practitioners, user-led organisations and voluntary and community organisations, was emphasised for everyone. Peer support is also increasingly recognised as key to this.

“Those taking their personal budget as a direct payment were achieving better outcomes that those with a managed personal budget.”
The SCIE research showed that although they are likely to benefit greatly, there can be attitudinal and cultural obstacles to older people and people with mental health problems being offered different ways to manage personal budgets, in particular direct payments. This can be because of people’s perceptions of an individual’s capacity, and concerns about risk and support. Sometimes practitioners can make decisions based on assumptions about certain service user groups rather than speaking with the individual about which option is right for them. The Audit Commission (http://bit.ly/dswZfX) also found that funding structures between health and social care have also been found to influence access to personal budgets for people with mental health problems.

Early indications are that personal budgets could work well for people from marginalised communities, such as those from black and minority ethnic communities or who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. However, more active outreach work to marginalised communities would be needed, working through trusted networks and groups to explain personal budgets and the opportunities they provide for setting up support that is suitable for people’s relationships and cultural needs.
Moving forward with personal budgets – addressing some of the challenges of implementation...

The picture provided by recent research shows clearly that personal budgets can improve outcomes for people using social care. This should be celebrated. It is also clear that the situation varies significantly across councils. We have an improved understanding of what works and better practice to build on and share, but some councils need to urgently raise their game by implementing best practice.

It is therefore undoubtedly right to maintain the impetus and help more people access the benefits of personal budgets as set out in Think Local, Act Personal. Going forward, however, there needs to be a strong focus on the following issues:

1) Reducing unnecessary process and restrictions and increasing flexibility.
2) Improving equality of access.
3) Providing good information and advice about personal budgets and how they can be used.
4) Improving delivery of both direct payments and managed personal budgets.
5) Developing and engaging the provider market.

Think Local, Act Personal will draw on and build up this information to improve personal budget delivery.

We now summarise some of the issues identified by the research, as well as our thoughts on how to tackle them. We also point towards helpful materials or products that may assist.

1) Reducing unnecessary process and restrictions

Apart from worries about funding (by far the biggest issue for people), these are the main concerns expressed frequently by personal budget holders, carers and professionals. Many complain that the opposite of what was intended is happening in some places. So, instead of streamlining arrangements and reducing transaction costs, new burdens are being layered on to previous systems. This has been found to reduce cost effectiveness and efficiency, and be a major cause of delay and frustration. Efficiency savings appear to be occurring where councils are reviewing and streamlining business processes, for example, by proportionate monitoring. It is now vital to use learning from positive implementation to make rapid and significant change to systems and practices – introducing lean approaches that reduce costs, speed up delivery and extend control.
Adult social care – minimum process

It is clear that the most significant efficiencies in social care are likely to come through helping people reduce their reliance on paid support, focusing on strengths and aspirations as well as support needs, boosting existing support networks, and changing the way that support is conceived and provided. Think Local, Act Personal and partners have developed materials that set out a range of approaches to this, including Personalisation, Productivity and Efficiency (http://bit.ly/lWR8i). However, councils do need to review their processes to look for the win-win of removing unnecessary and expensive process and transaction while speeding up access and freeing personal budget holders to be creative and efficient.

Think Local, Act Personal has now published Adult Social Care – Minimum Process Framework, available from www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk. It is a simple framework based upon our learning from the last three years of the Putting People First programme. This offers councils a model for reviewing end-to-end processes with helpful examples and guides to particular parts of the system. It covers the process from prevention; supporting recovery and maximising independence through to people staying in control of their support. At each stage, it offers advice on what should be in place and how to avoid unnecessary process and transaction (“process creep”).

Support planning

A particular challenge is the common confusion around the level of detail required to release resources as opposed to the more detailed support planning sometimes needed to get best use of resources. This seems to have led to unnecessary process that costs councils money and causes frustration, delay and stress for people and carers.

In addition, many personal budget holders and carers complain that undue restrictions on how budgets can be used are often imposed at this stage. We need to separate this release of resources from the subsequent creative planning people may do to use the PB well.

Think Local, Act Personal has published Re-thinking support planning – available on www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk – as a think piece to provide some advice and alternative thinking on these issues. The objective is to keep the process allowing release of resources simple and fast, while making best practice support planning available to everyone who needs and wants it. This will protect the innovation and flexibility essential for personalisation to thrive.

The essential component enabling release of resources for a direct payment is an agreed set of outcomes that the person’s budget is to address. These outcomes will ideally be expressed in broad terms, allowing the individual maximum freedom of choice in the way their budget is used to meet them. The key issue in law is that the outcomes are directly linked to assessed eligible need, and the sum of money offered in the budget is seen as reasonable to meet such needs. Re-thinking support planning has advice on how to do this.

Checking use of budgets

This can be another source of extra process and frustration. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Audit Commission have both stressed the need for proportionate monitoring (http://bit.ly/nJi8zU and http://bit.ly/dswZfx respectively). Checking on use of the funds to meet outcomes can be done at review, and any detailed information about spend can be required at that stage should concerns about specific usage arise. As financial pressures increase, tensions within councils can make it very difficult to maintain an approach where the detail of plans is not scrutinized.
There is some evidence to suggest that talking a more proportionate approach to monitoring and auditing the detail of expenditure can be more cost effective as well as protecting the spirit of personalisation.

Personalisation, Productivity and Efficiency (http://bit.ly/lLWRBi) and Practical Approaches to Improving Productivity through Personalisation in Adult Social Care (http://bit.ly/jm1gK8) both provide useful advice on working through this issue. User led payroll/personal assistant services and those pre-payment card schemes which offer proper choice and flexibility can play a helpful role here.

**Approaches to planning good support**

Re-thinking support planning proposes a shift from the approaches operating in most councils. Many current models of support planning are over-professionalised, time intensive and costly. Following a quicker allocation of resources based on broad outcomes to be achieved, more people need to be supported to develop their own support plans. There needs to be a wider range of easily accessible tools and low cost support options that don’t rely on one-to-one professional advice where this is not needed. Support planning tools and resources, including peer support, should be made much more accessible using web based technologies as well as traditional means. User-led organisations are particularly successful in empowering people to take direct payments and need to be more involved in developing new and more sustainable approaches to support planning. Of course some people will continue to need professional or specialist involvement but this needs to be more carefully targeted.

**2) Equality of access**

The research shows that for a number of reasons, some people seem less likely to access personal budgets or to benefit equally – including people who lack capacity, have mental health problems and in some circumstances older people. Councils will need to increasingly focus on removing barriers to access and benefit. Think Local, Act Personal will gather and share learning from across the country.

SCIE have published specific guidance and practical ideas for working with people who lack capacity or who need support to make their views known (http://bit.ly/lB4q5t).

The Paths to Personalisation resource is a ‘whole system, whole life framework’ commissioned by the former National Mental Health Development Unit to help support the use of personal budgets and person-centred support for people with mental health problems (http://bit.ly/cOYUaq).

Personal budgets for older people – making it happen (http://bit.ly/zbRhB) focuses on how councils can make personal budgets work well with older people and their families.

The Alzheimer’s Society will shortly publish research and guidance on personalisation and personal budgets for people with dementia. Additional resources addressing age equality, risk and safeguarding, eligibility criteria and inequalities in mental health are published in the useful documents and further reading section at the end of this paper.
3) Providing good information about personal budgets and how they can be used

Both the POET survey and the National Audit Office research show that this needs to be improved at a local level. Think Local, Act Personal has a work-stream on providing information to the public. This will include exploring options for development of better more specialised advisory services for people in need of care and support services primarily outside of current council arrangements, including via user-led organisations.

There are existing advice and good practice examples on the Think Local, Act Personal website about the information, advice and advocacy that specific groups of people need (http://bit.ly/jwvWco). There is also material from the Local Government Improvement and Development looking at how councils can improve information and advice for the public about social care. They have published some evidence-based resources as well as a strategy framework (http://bit.ly/kbGRAs).

Some local authorities that have made strong progress with personal budgets are sharing their examples of personal budget information provision. For example Essex County Council has produced the leaflet *A brief introduction to self-directed support: your personal budget for social care* (http://bit.ly/iA4thv). Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council have created a well regarded website that provides information and advice to local citizens (http://bit.ly/nNSx8j). Another useful resource is *Information and advice for people who fund their own social care* (http://bit.ly/mETbza).

4) Direct payments and managed personal budgets

The government’s vision for social care, and Think Local, Act Personal reinforce personal budgets as mainstream and at the same time express an expectation that direct payments should become the delivery model for most. To achieve this, councils will need to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to support the take-up of direct payments by personal budget holders. It is a concern therefore that the current trend in personal budget take up is towards managed personal budgets, not direct payments.

**It is essential to:**

1) Review over-restrictive and bureaucratic approaches
2) Bring practice closer to the policy intent of direct payments
3) Streamline process and reduce operational costs, whilst at the same time improving outcomes for citizens.

Direct payments must now be mainstreamed and are no longer marginal to social care. Think Local, Act Personal have published *Improving Delivery of Direct Payments*, available from www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk, which offers advice to help councils improve take up and outcomes. Direct payments are not suitable for everyone, but they are likely to benefit the majority, especially when appropriate support is in place to use them.
User-led organisations can provide effective and efficient support to direct payment users. We know from evidence built up over many years that for those who have used them, direct payments are preferred to – and achieve better outcomes than – traditionally arranged services. Making direct payments the principal delivery mechanism for council-funded adult social care will be a significant challenge for some local authorities. It is essential that over-restrictive and bureaucratic approaches are reviewed, and that practice is brought closer to the policy intent. There is also a significant opportunity to streamline process and reduce operational costs, whilst at the same time improving outcomes.

Advice on ‘managed’ personal budgets was issued to councils in 2010 (http://bit.ly/kbXWZg). These are likely to be suitable for some people and having direct payments as the “default” position does not and should not mean that people feel pressured to have one against their wishes or interests. Set against this concern, however, is some worry that managed personal budgets are “authentic” – that they really offer people choice and control and are not simply a re-labelling of what went before to reach target numbers.

Think Local, Act Personal states:

“Personal budgets not taken as a direct payment should be offered as a managed account, but this arrangement must be authentic in affording people real choice and control. Simply telling someone how much the council is contributing to the cost of their care, whilst providing some transparency, will not on its own achieve this.”

As has been set out in previous advice, a managed arrangement must clearly indicate how the budget is to be spent on behalf of the individual concerned. All component services must show the call-off costs against the personal budget so that the individual understands how their funds are being spent, can express agreement or not, and can request changes to its use. Councils should offer a range of ways that such budgets can be managed, including for example Individual Service Funds with provider organisations.

Checking progress to improve delivery

How will councils know that they are making progress in improving outcomes and experiences for personal budget users?

Think Local, Act Personal states:

“Councils and providers need to demonstrate the difference being made to someone’s life. This can be done by putting in place independent processes to check that outcomes are achieved and publishing the results. As part of this, it will be important to include an understanding of the experience of local people who self-fund their care and support.”

Advice on how to do this is offered in Personal Budgets: Checking the Results (http://bit.ly/k86Mo0). This paper considers emerging approaches to developing outcome-based performance measures within social care. It highlights and promotes sector-led developments in building an evidence base for the effectiveness of personal budgets that can be harnessed and used to drive the future direction of local social care systems.
There are low cost approaches that councils and their partners can use to measure progress and identify areas for improvement while benchmarking with others. Provider organisations also need to further develop ways to actively seek out and put on record the aspirations of people using their services and which help them re-design support.

5) Market and provider development

Personal budget holders need a good supply of local, high quality support to choose from. The Think Local, Act Personal Partnership is developing practice materials to help with this through the National Market Development Forum (http://bit.ly/m3KNyu).

The Shaping the Market For Personalisation: Diagnostic and Action Planning Tool (http://bit.ly/kp5bBa) was developed to help commissioners and others with a stake in shaping local markets to understand and assess their progress in delivering personalisation in adult social care. The Provider Blueprint (http://bit.ly/pWcKl2) shows how organisations can work in person-centred ways to deliver personalised services. It shows how providers are changing the way they work and includes practical case studies and other materials produced by providers working together with the people they support and commissioners.

Other tools that may help in this area include:

- Progress for Providers (http://bit.ly/aJKaD3), a self-assessment tool developed by providers and commissioners to help similar organisations think about their progress in responding to the personalisation agenda
- Getting Personal: measuring providers’ progress towards personalisation a jointly developed SCIE and Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG) product, another tool aimed at helping providers assess how ready they are to deliver personalised care services and direct them to resources that will help make improvements (http://bit.ly/cRiAEX).

Think Local, Act Personal will also offer further advice to councils on market and provider development.

What next?

Following this review and the recent scoping work on personal budgets delivery undertaken by the Association for Directors of Adult Social Care, we are establishing a national Self-Directed Support Forum.

This will bring together those who can both provide intelligence about personal budget delivery and take action to support improvement. The future work of the Partnership in this area will be steered by the forum.
Useful documents and further reading

Please note this list is by no means exhaustive, but a collection of the most up-to-date and useful materials.

Surveys and research

The March 2011 ADASS Personal Budgets Survey 

The National Personal Budgets Survey (POET) of over 2000 personal budget users and carers’ self-reported outcomes and experiences 

The National Audit Office report on oversight of user choice and provider competition in care market and the Ipsos MORI survey of the experiences of users of personal budgets in adult social care 

The Office for Disability Issues report on support planning and brokerage 

The reports from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) on learning from the personal budget experiences of older people and people with mental health problems 
http://bit.ly/fVZKO8 and on personalisation, productivity and efficiency 

Community Care’s survey of social care practitioners’ views on the progress of personalisation 

Essex Coalition of Disabled People and OPM’s personalisation briefing on experiences of service users 

Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Standards We Expect user-led project 

Guidance, briefings and toolkits

Personalisation – general overview

Personalisation: a rough guide http://bit.ly/1qCTg4

Must knows for lead members of adult services http://bit.ly/qqQNPz

Efficiency and productivity

Personalisation, productivity and efficiency http://bit.ly/LWR8i


Practical Approaches to Improving Productivity through Personalisation in Adult Social Care http://bit.ly/m1gKB


Commissioning and market development

Personal Budgets: Council Commissioned Services http://bit.ly/kbXWZg


Commissioning to develop and sustain user-led organisations http://bit.ly/iffOjc


Practical approaches to market and provider development http://bit.ly/8Y3Wzo
Self-directed support and support planning
Improving Direct Payment Delivery http://bit.ly/gPsDh3
Personal Budgets: Checking the Results http://bit.ly/k86Mo0
Personalisation through Person-Centred Planning http://bit.ly/dn2KMm
Outcome focused reviews: a practical guide http://bit.ly/qKEB2g
Practical approaches to co-production http://bit.ly/92pnvC

Equality
Pathways to Personalisation http://bit.ly/oYUaq
SCIE’s resources guides for Adult Services: Mental Capacity http://bit.ly/lB4q5t

Fair Access to Care (FACs)

Personalisation, risk enablement and safeguarding
Practical approaches to safeguarding and personalisation http://bit.ly/qLUopE

Building community capacity
Practical approaches to building community capacity http://bit.ly/qahMtc

Are we there yet? A check list for building community connections http://bit.ly/mOHGQQ

Policy documents and partnership agreements
Think Local, Act Personal – a sector wide partnership agreement www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk
Dilnot Commission Fairer Care Funding http://bit.ly/nhOqCJU

Department of Health Statutory Guidance
The Department of Health has issued statutory guidance on implementing personalised services in the light of relevant legislation. For further details see:
Fairer contributions guidance: calculating an individual’s contribution to their personal budget http://bit.ly/diG2th
Supplementary guidance to Fairer charging policies for home care and other non-residential social services: guidance for Councils with Social Services Responsibilities http://bit.ly/pzyRxu
Guidance on direct payments for community care, services for carers and children’s services http://bit.ly/tgKitu8

Easy read documents relating to personalisation
Think Local, Act Personal partnership agreement http://bit.ly/IBK1Fq
Norfolk County Council’s leaflet on personal budgets http://bit.ly/kWaLLI
Northumberland Care Trust’s leaflet on personal budgets http://bit.ly/IMWt0w
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