

Making sure  
personal budgets  
work for older people

**BRIEFING FOR THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S  
& ADULTS SERVICES CONFERENCE**

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social care  
institute for excellence



**think local  
act personal**

## Challenges and examples of emerging positive practice

**1** Reluctance to use personal budgets and especially direct payments amongst older people and their carers for reasons including preferring existing arrangements, fear of loss or reduction of services, fear of trying new alternatives, complexity, time consuming processes and burdens of responsibility.

- Some councils have provided creative support to think about outcomes and non traditional models of support; often working closely with trusted voluntary organisations like Age UK or Alzheimer's Society to provide training, information and advice.
- Other councils are undertaking systems reviews to reduce form filling, dispense with panels for smaller support packages, introducing pre-paid envelopes and changing time tables for financial monitoring.

**3** Workforce issues including cultural, training and practice development issues.

- A range of approaches have been identified to help staff adapt, including systematic and medium term training and development investments for front line staff.
- Some councils have developed comprehensive staff guidance and quick look guides or toolkits produced for staff to support older people with options. Others have employed senior practitioners to mentor and coach workers.
- Other councils are restructuring teams to amalgamate older people services with younger adults staff to help with cultural change or are working with user led organisations to help change staff culture.

**4** Lack of suitable information, advice and guidance including limited knowledge and understanding of personal budgets and direct payments. Trusted information sources are not always providing positive advice.

- Some councils are focusing on educating GPs, district nurses and other health staff so that first conversations with older people are positive about options for directing own care through personal budgets.
- Other councils are coproducing information kits and leaflets with user-led organisations or are working with voluntary sector like Age UK on provision of information.

**2** The circumstances within which older people use social care including crisis situations, rapidly fluctuating needs and modest budgets focused on personal care.

- Some councils are re-thinking PBs as one element of the social care pathway and are linking their re-ablement strategies to personal budget processes and practice.
- Others are providing assistive technology, community equipment and specialist services at point of pre-determination of eligibility, followed by a proportionate support planning process that allows time for older people to consider their options once they have stabilised, and recuperated.

**5** Lack of suitable support for people to plan and make good use of personal budgets.

- Some councils are externalising their brokerage function and actively seeking user-led or carers organisations to become new providers of this service.
- Other councils are using community groups and peer support networks to assist with support planning, or are working with family members (where they are able to) to share roles.

Older people form the largest proportion of users of adult social care, and the largest part of adult social services expenditure goes on the over 65s. We must make sure this group benefits well from personal budgets (PBs).

Issues concerning PBs for older people and their carers have been prominent since the original DH research on individual budgets in 2005. In April 2012, ADASS published *The Case for Tomorrow*, calling for "an overhaul" of personal budgets for older people. They did this because they identified a range of challenges that the association believes need to be addressed - These built on issues identified by others, including the Alzheimer's Society in their report on personal budgets for people with dementia *Getting Personal*.

In response, Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) agreed to lead a review of personal budgets for older people including people with dementia. It is doing this alongside its partners the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), and with a steering group from ADASS, Department of Health, Alzheimer's Society, Age UK and the Standing Commission on Carers.

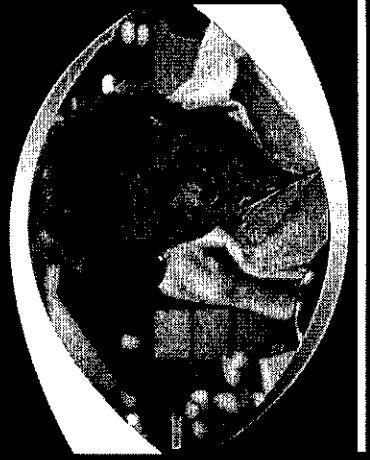
This review, led by Martin Routledge from TLAP working closely with Sarah Carr from SCIE, started in July. To date it has reviewed key challenges to successful implementation of personal budgets for older people and has started to identify positive practice and solutions.

Data and research confirms:

- Strong average progress with numbers for people aged 65 and over, but with very high variability from council to council.
- Significant increase in numbers has been via more managed personal budgets.
- Steady numbers for direct payments, but these remain significantly lower for older people than for under 65s. Again there is significant variation in direct payment numbers across councils and regions.
- For people receiving PBs generally positive outcomes in most areas of life, (found by the National Personal Budget survey) and generally few reported negative effects.
- Significant frustrations with personal budgets processes.

- Good indications of the factors that lead to positive outcomes, which are currently less present for older than younger people and with big cross council variation.

From looking at council returns to the ADASS PB survey, the review has identified that most are identifying significant challenges in implementing personal budgets with older people - and in particular achieving good numbers while also being confident they are making a positive difference. However we have also highlighted that there is considerable emerging positive practice in each of the areas identified as challenging.



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## Challenges and examples of emerging positive practice (continued...)

- 6** Lack of market development, including existing contracts that constrain creativity, people buying what they bought before and difficulties commissioning smaller packages with providers unwilling to support at lower costs.
- Some councils are commissioning support from specific organisations through spot contracts while others are remodelling individual service funds that supports more direct relationships between providers and the older person.
  - Reorganising in house supports to better support people with managed personal budgets has been found to a helpful approach, as too paying attention to workforce supply and suitability e.g. personal assistant registers and apprenticeship schemes, and expanding involvement of third party support agencies.
- 7** A focus on helping people stay safe
- Some councils are coordinating safeguarding and information teams.
  - Others are focusing on risk enablement systems.

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## Next steps

The full review will be published shortly on [www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk).

From October 2012 to March 2013, we will focus on drawing out the promising approaches to tackle the challenges highlighted. That's where we need your help. If you're one of the councils making good progress in implementing personal budgets for older people or a provider, support agency or user/carer organisation making a difference in this area, please get in touch [thinklocalactpersonal@scie.org.uk](mailto:thinklocalactpersonal@scie.org.uk).

We will be commissioning further work around some of the specific elements of positive practice, with a specific emphasis on cost effective and

sustainable approaches. This will become the basis for recommendations to central and local government and others to improve results for older people. These recommendations will place personal budgets firmly in the context of other elements of systems and practices to support the health and well being of older people.

We'll develop recommendations for implementation by national and local government so that in 2013/14, we can move ahead with sharing this practice regionally and nationally.

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