

## **Self Directed Support Factsheet – 2**

### **Personal budgets: an introduction**

Councils in England have started to offer personal budgets to adults who are eligible for support from social services. Some councils have developed this new system more than others so you will need to find out what your council is currently offering.

### **What is a personal budget?**

A personal budget is a 'virtual budget', or amount of money allocated to meet your assessed needs. Individuals can decide to use their personal budget in different ways, these are:

- A personal budget managed by the council;
- A personal budget managed by a third party;
- A personal budget received as a direct payment;
- A combination of these options.

### **What is an individual budget?**

Sometimes, people use individual budgets to describe personal budgets. But sometimes people use individual budgets to talk about budgets that include more than social care funding. If your council offer you an individual budget, ask them to be clear about what funding will be included in the budget.

### **What can you use a personal budget for?**

You should be able to use personal budgets for different kinds of support. The key point is that you must spend the budget in a way that goes towards meeting your assessed needs or agreed outcomes. Generally speaking people could have more freedom when they have a personal budget. You should be able to use the budget to buy support and/or equipment in the way that you think is most appropriate.

## **What shouldn't you use a personal budget for?**

You cannot use a social care personal budget to buy services which the Health Service should provide. If you decide to receive your personal budget as a direct payment there are certain things you cannot use a direct payment for. See Sense's factsheet 'Direct payments: an introduction'.

## **Your rights**

Councils will use some sort of system to decide on the amount of your personal budget. The most common method that councils are using to decide this is a resource allocation system (RAS) questionnaire. However any system must take account of deafblind people who require specialist support and your personal budget must be enough to meet assessed needs. See Sense's factsheet 'Direct payments and personal budgets: receiving the right amount'.

In the future, the government would like all adult users of social care in England to have a personal budget, but you should have a real choice about how this works for you. For example you should not have to receive the personal budget as a direct payment.

## **Case studies**

### **1. A personal budget managed by the council**

Rishma has been using a communicator guide service provided directly by her council. The council are offering a personal budget to all adults who use social care. Rishma goes through the process for deciding how much her budget should be, this includes a specialist assessment. Rishma decides that she would like her personal budget to be spent on the communicator guide service provided by the council, but as a personal budget user, Rishma should have more control over when she gets support.

### **2. A personal budget managed by a third party**

Holly wants a the local centre for independent living to manage her personal budget. Her council contracts to hand over the budget to a local organisation. It is then up to Holly and the organisation to organise the day-to-day arrangements.

### **3. A personal budget received as a direct payment**

John wants to receive his personal budget as a direct payment. This means he takes on responsibility for managing the budget, though he is entitled to support in doing this. He has to open a separate bank account to receive the direct payment.

### **4. Taking a personal budget as a combination of services provided by the council and a direct payment**

Daniel's council have started to offer people personal budgets. Daniel already has had a specialist assessment and currently receives a service from his council. The council include the outcome of an updated specialist assessment when his council are deciding on the size of his personal budget. Given the different options he has with a personal budget, he decides that the council will continue to provide the communicator guide service to meet some of his needs but that he will also take a direct payment to pay for some support so that he has some flexibility. He employs 3 communicator guides on a flexible basis to support him at this time.

### **Resources**

#### **National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL)**

Post: Unit 3.40 Canterbury Court, 1-3 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6DE.

Telephone: 0207 587 1663

Fax: 0207 582 2469

Email: [info@ncil.org.uk](mailto:info@ncil.org.uk)

Web: [www.ncil.org.uk](http://www.ncil.org.uk)

#### **The Rowan Organisation**

Post: Eliot Park Innovation Centre, Barling Way, Nuneaton, CV10 7RH.

Telephone: 02476 322 860

Information Service: 0845 608 8048

Textphone: 02476 374 439

Fax: 02476 374 948

Web: [www.therowan.org](http://www.therowan.org)

**The Deafblind Directory – a database of providers of services  
for deafblind children and adults**

Web: [www.sense.org.uk/deafblind\\_directory](http://www.sense.org.uk/deafblind_directory)

Email: [deafblind.directory@sense.org.uk](mailto:deafblind.directory@sense.org.uk)

March 2010