



Response from Buckinghamshire County Council to the Office for Disability Issues' consultation on the Right to Control

Buckinghamshire County Council is pleased to take this opportunity to contribute a view towards the current consultation on the Right to Control. Although our submission is not on this occasion structured according to the questions posed in the consultation document, we are keen to provide our generic view in support of the upcoming 'trailblazer sites' and the current policy direction on the Right to Control reflected in the Welfare Reform Bill.

Policy direction in recent years has gained a healthy momentum towards an increased choice and control for users of public services. From the success of the disabled user movement with the advent of direct payments legislation thirteen years ago through to the current consideration of Personal Health Budgets currently before Parliament, the direction of care policy over the last decade has reflected the wider community agenda of rights, responsibility, independence and autonomy for the individual.

Our Health Our Care Our Say (DH 2006) developed on from Independence, Wellbeing and Choice (DH 2005) to assert the vision and intended outcomes of the personalisation agenda of choice and control in adult social care. This policy direction was further detailed in the ministerial concordat Putting People First (HM Government 2007) and the two recent transformation circulars (DH 2008) (DH 2009).

The evidence base for the progression of individual budgets to support choice, control and independence is growing, with results from the Evaluation of the Individual Budgets Pilot Programme (Glendinning et al 2008) demonstrating clear evidence that people using individual budgets were more likely to feel in control of their

lives than people receiving conventional social care support (although different satisfaction rates between different client groups should be noted).

However the evaluation report also highlighted the difficulties experienced in attempts to bundle different funding streams into one budget. Different funding streams (eg Access to Work, Independent Living Fund, Supporting People, Disabled Facilities Grants, Integrated Community Equipment Services) each have their own statutory rules and access criteria which created obstacles to the pilot's goals.

The incorporation of additional funding streams within the personalisation agenda was seen as an exciting but frustrating element of the individual budget pilots due to legislative and accountability barriers experienced.

The introduction of the Right to Control will help to begin to overcome these difficulties through the creation of powers to allocate resources from varied funding streams in the form of cash payments. Work to break down system barriers experienced in the individual budget pilots (eg the ring fencing of Access to Work monies, the prescribed use of ILF monies, the administrative requirements to secure DFG monies etc) will be imperative to ensure policy success.

The increased flexibility and choice which will be afforded to disabled people via the Right to Control is a welcome and timely policy which has the potential to deliver outcomes of the highest quality for disabled people and their carers. This flexibility will be enabled by the use of different funding streams, and might also provide efficiencies in the reduction of bureaucracy. However, this should not mean that service users lose out by there being insufficient funds to meet their assessed needs; flexibility does not equate to a reduction in funds available.

We await with interest the progression of the trailblazer sites from 2010 and the lessons to be learned in relation to how to make the Right to Control easy and safe for people to use, what the benefits will be, what the costs will be and what works best for disabled people of different ages with different needs.

Submitted by:

[personal details removed]

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References

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