

Case Study: Individual Budgets Pilot Project New way of working

Leicester City Council

An Individual Budget is designed to provide individuals who currently receive services greater choice and control over their support arrangements. The government is committed to piloting individual budgets with a view to rolling them out nationally should they prove successful. The individual budgets pilot project is a cross government initiative led by the Department of Health working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Background

Leicester City Council was one of the Individual Budget pilot sites and the pilot itself became one of the key drivers for change at the Council. The pilot began in 2006 and ran until March 2008. The Council has, since March 2008, continued to roll out the process as well as working on the wider agenda of 'Adult Social Care Transformation'.

Who was involved?

The pilot involved working with and consulting with key stakeholders such as service users, social workers, finance departments and carers. The pilot had a board in place which consisted of around 15 – 20 members from a broad stakeholder representation.

There were also small sub groups that dealt with more operational issues.

Nomination forms were used so that people could elect themselves onto the groups. These forms were sent out with staff newsletters, to existing service user forums and to providers. All groups were sent the terms of reference. There was administrative support to collate this information and this was checked to ensure that there was fair representation. All meetings had an agenda and were minuted, and people had opportunities to add agenda items.

Barriers

During the initial meetings there was some resistance to the project but equally there was an excitement about what this could mean for people receiving services.

When 'Putting People First' was launched more questions were asked and opinions changed. This was mainly due to the fact that it had become part of the government agenda and therefore expanded from pilot to mainstream.

Benefits

Through the pilot there were differing benefits to each of the stakeholders.

Service users gained more choice and control over their social care funding, and became more involved and central to the process. Service users also used the support to help them meet particular personal outcomes.

Social workers were enabled to think about new ways of providing support to people rather than working from a menu of services.

Carers became more involved in the process and they particularly had more choices in how respite monies could be spent which supported the reduction of carer stress.

The model

During the pilot new paperwork tools were created to promote self assessment and support planning. In particular, the Council produced an accessible support plan and guidelines that were also adopted by Lincolnshire and Barnsley councils.

To assist the support planning process the Council used their accessible website www.ldicn.org.uk to provide Individual Budget holders the use of different services available to them as well as the ability to view the self assessment questionnaire and support plan online.

Halfway through the pilot the Council went on to develop a local DVD about Individual Budgets. This is in an accessible format with subtitles, spoken text, and in easy read format. The development of this included the need to involve service users, carers and staff who all featured in the DVD.

The future

In terms of the future the Council has now developed their 'Target Operating Model' and have started to consult with staff now that they are starting to implement some of changes needed in Adult Social Care.

These will be areas such as improving the customer journey, reducing inefficient processes, embedding safeguarding though all areas of the customer journey, improving skills within the workforce, and looking at services we will deliver or purchase through strategic commissioning.

Leicester are aware that implementing all changes could take up to three years, however they keen to ensure that customers are supported to achieve outcomes that improve their life through Self Directed Support.

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