Personalisation
Children, young people and families

An In Control Briefing by Nic Crosby
Personalisation

Children, young people and families
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Acknowledgements
With thanks and acknowledgment to all the work of the children's services on the Taking Control programme (In Control Children and Young People). A special mention to Alison Cathles, Paul Connolly, Pippa Murray, Simon Duffy and Clive Miller.

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March 2010

In Control
In Control is an independent network for social innovation. It develops, tests and shares ideas that can reform the welfare state and promote citizenship and community. It is a small organisation, but it supports an extensive network of organisations:

- adult social services departments
- children's services
- NHS Primary Care Trusts.

In Control is also a member of In Control International which has sister organisations in Australia, Czech Republic, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
Introduction

This paper is the first of three Briefings to be published by In Control which will describe the organisation’s work and vision for personalisation in the children’s world. The paper does not set out to answer all questions but rather to offer some building blocks which can create a transformed relationship between the child and their family and the state.

In Control has shaped these building blocks in three years of work with children’s services across the country. In Control, which is now a charity, has played a widely acknowledged central role in the development of Individual Budgets, Self-Directed Support and personalisation during the seven years since it began work.

To date, the change agenda (as reflected by the raft of Government guidance and policy) has focused largely on the world of adult social care and, more recently, on Health.

Personalisation for children and families certainly includes a disability rights agenda but needs to extend further and describe a transformed relationship and understanding between the state and every child and their family.

Summary

- Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support work well for children and young people across all ages. Personalised funding and support make best sense of a child-centred approach to meeting additional support needs.
- Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support for children complete what can now be described as a whole-life approach to supporting citizens of all ages.
- Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support will enable a move into adulthood which is very different from that experienced by most young people now: families’ skills will be valued and used; young people will be supported by voluntary sector organisations based in the community; there will be a single support plan setting out how outcomes will be achieved and available resources will be used.
- Disabled children and young people will participate more in the life of the local community. Their more visible presence will encourage the wider community to play its part in keeping young people safe by addressing issues of isolation and exclusion.
- A focus on the efficient use of available money can only identify the lack of money in the system. Making best use of a child and family’s ‘real wealth’ – their income but also their connections, capacities, access, assets and resilience – will maximise opportunities in the local community and the potential of an Individual Budget to support the family in providing a healthy and fulfilling home environment for a son, daughter or fostered child.
- The personalisation agenda is not simply a new model of service delivery. Rather, it is about supporting the development of a transformed relationship between the state and the individual child, young person or family – a relationship centred on working co-operatively and founded on citizenship and entitlement.
- This agenda of personalisation clarifies the relationship between the state and the child and family. The state supports parents but does not view itself as parent to all children. The state’s responsibility is to support families and children to make best use of their wealth. Where the family has little or no real wealth, the state will respond. This response may, in some cases, mean assuming a parental role for a child or young person.
Values: first foundation of a new pathway

In Control has developed a clear understanding that Self-Directed Support and Individual Budgets are but one part of a process that delivers a transformed relationship between the state and its statutory agencies and the citizen or population.

From gift to entitlement

In Control sets out a vision in which the relationship between state and citizen is transformed from one of top-down delivery – a ‘gift’ model of service delivery – to one in which eligible citizens can direct how support is given, delivered and managed through the flexible use of individualised funding i.e. an Individual Budget.

This new relationship is based on citizenship. It empowers citizens to take control of their lives, to be supported in ways which make sense to them and to live independently as active members of their local community.

Figure 1 – From gift to entitlement
Real wealth

An Individual Budget is only one part of the real wealth an individual or family has to draw on when challenged with meeting a person’s support needs.

Real wealth is the sum total of resources – our financial assets but also the skills and abilities we possess and draw on in our day-to-day lives as individual members of the wider community.

Real wealth is made up of:

- connections – our family networks, social networks, the people we know
- capacities – our skills, abilities and personal qualities
- access – to both the physical environment and information
- assets – the sum total of our assets that may include an Individual Budget
- resilience – our physical, mental and emotional well-being, our inner strength.

Money on its own will not be enough to meet all of a person’s support needs. We need to make intelligent use of all the resources available – the real wealth that can build individually focused support systems which promote self-reliance and strength.

These support packages in turn must deliver the agreed set of outcomes on which the original allocation of a budget was made. Individual funding adds to the real wealth of the family. That person’s support needs can then be met in a way that both promotes citizenship and strengthens the relationship of those supporting the child, young person, family or adult.

If the state approaches children and young people and their families as people with real wealth, it invests in the future real wealth of the nation.

KEY POINTS

- Children, young people, families, adults and older people are all members of and contributors to their local community and wider society. All those eligible are entitled to an Individual Budget and the support they need to manage that budget. They should be able to make best use of their own real wealth to shape the support they need.
- Children, young people and their families can draw on many other available resources outside the Individual Budget when thinking about support and life. Money is only a small part of the real wealth available.
A changed relationship: second foundation of a new pathway

Central to all of In Control’s work has been the design of a new and transformed relationship between individual and state.

A simple illustration of what this means for a child and their family is explained by a social worker from Gloucestershire: ‘In the past, I always thought that I was sitting on the opposite side of the table. Now I am sitting next to the family and together we are working out how to get the best support and make the best decisions about support for their son.’ This perspective is mirrored by feedback from families who feel that doing things in a self-directed way has changed their perception and view of social workers.

Young people who have been involved in pilots of the Budget Holding Lead Professional report a similar experience. They rated having consistent and ‘valuing support’ from a single professional as highly as having control over how a small Individual Budget could be used to support them. In all cases, access to a flexible resource is the common factor, a vehicle that brings people together to seek solutions and opportunities. The transformed relationship that resulted was highly valued by all.

If Self-Directed Support is to be fully successful, it is of paramount importance that families, children and young people participate at all stages of the process and are involved in the wider, long-term introduction and oversight of personalisation. Participation must be underpinned by transparency in processes – assessments, allocations and decision-making. Transparency is key to the building of an equal partnership between child, family and the statutory service.

This new relationship does not challenge the state’s responsibility to safeguard its children, just as personalisation does not challenge the state’s duty to safeguard vulnerable adults. It does, however, move from the existing top-down gift model of support (see Figure 1) to a model of citizenship and entitlement – one which respects the real wealth of the family and their son or daughter alongside the offer of support from the state.

The new relationship seeks to make best use of all available resources to deliver optimum access, support and opportunities.

**KEY POINTS**

- Families and those supporting them are equal partners in working out how to support their son or daughter. The real wealth of the child and the family will be central to making support and access work to best effect and to the delivery of outcomes identified (with skilled support) by the family.
- Families will need specialist and expert advice but this advice and support should not challenge the family’s ability to direct the support their son or daughter needs.
- The participation of families, children and young people will be a marker of the success of Self-Directed Support in the children’s world.
A new pathway for children and families

In Control is now setting out a ‘whole-life’ approach. This approach is explored in some detail in A REPORT ON IN CONTROL’S THIRD PHASE.

Over the past seven years, In Control has used a simple seven-step illustration to set out a ‘customer’ journey to Self-Directed Support. Recently, work has been done to revise this illustration and make it more open to children and young people and to other sectors of support (Health and Education). Key to this revision has been the work of In Control’s Children’s Programme.

The revised Seven Steps offer a simple blueprint for a transformed children’s service that could offer Self-Directed Support and Individual Budgets to its local population across different spheres of need – education, health and social care. It is most important that we regard this pathway as a simple solutions-focused approach to meeting support needs. It need not include an Individual Budget but it does take into account the real wealth of the child and family when considering their current situation and the support needed.

Directing our own lives (and support) as we all do on a day-to-day basis does not depend on having an Individual Budget. Rather, this self-direction is based on making best use of real wealth.

1. Need some support
In order for people to be able to access support when it is needed (including the first time or at a time of crisis) open doors are needed in a number of easily accessible places. These points of access might be the GP, health visitor, youth worker, teacher, support assistant, police, voluntary organisation or nursery.

2. Identify my resources
Help is essential to identify all the resources available: the real wealth and an allocation of an indicative budget if appropriate. Part of this help will include the COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CAF) or similar information-gathering assessments, identifying desired and necessary outcomes of support and how this support can be accessed and delivered. It is important to always ensure that best use is made of universal services rather than simply using assessments as a route to specialist support services.

3. Make my plan
Creativity, local knowledge and flexibility are critical for making a good plan. It is possible to debate who is best placed to give support to children and families in developing a support plan. In some cases, it may be clear that the social worker has responsibility, but, in general, the more support that can be commissioned in the community – for example, through an enhanced commission of a children’s centre, or voluntary sector service – the better the outcomes are likely to be.

This view is based on responses from families and widely supported by evidence gathered in the roll-out of Individual Budgets in the adult world. Support from independent people and organisations with good local knowledge along with creative approaches to meeting support needs will generate good plans that make best use of all the wealth available, including the Individual Budget.
Any questions or challenges about the amount of budget are best posed during the creation of a support plan and not at the point when the finished plan is being presented. The planning process will reveal whether there is sufficient resource available.

4. Decide to do it

The **Children’s Act** is clear about the responsibility to ensure that a child’s identified needs are being met. The support plan will outline how needs identified within the assessment are to be met and how the Individual Budget alongside the family’s real wealth will be used to meet those needs. A support plan that does not meet the needs of the child would not be agreed.

5. Organise my support

Many families will seek help to organise and manage support (perhaps including the employment of supporters). How this long-term help can be offered is linked to how support to plan creatively is offered. Social work teams do not have the capacity to take on this role for every family. The voluntary sector is expected to take on a role in supporting families to organise and manage support. The sector can build on current direct payments services, voluntary groups and children’s centres. It can also link to services it is building in response to the development of Self-Directed Support in the adult world. Such a link has the potential to set up life-long relationships between a child, family and support service.

6. Improve my life

As the budget and plan go live, there is a need for simple information and support should there be any difficulties or crisis. A key worker, lead professional or social worker may be able to provide this support and information. Any process used, along with associated guidance around ‘carry-over’ of funding, contingency funds, planning and audit/accounting requirements, should be shared in easy-to-access formats. If a child or young person has fluctuating health or support needs, these can be accommodated and prepared for within a plan. If a crisis arises, the response should be swift and supportive, just as we would expect in the current system.

7. Reflect and learn

Many formats for child and person-centred reviews are already in use across children’s and adult services. These reviews, alongside accounts and audits, should generate learning about improvements to the plan, changes in support and use of finance and other resources.

**KEY POINTS**

- This pathway sets out an approach to meeting the support needs of any child or young person whether or not they are eligible for an Individual Budget.
- The success of this pathway will depend in part on skilled support that can make best use of the real wealth available.
- Any difference in views should be dealt with before the support plan is agreed. Drawing up the plan by making best use of all available resources provides a sound base for negotiation and creativity.
- An active and participating voluntary and private sector is essential to making the pathway work. It will not be the sole duty of statutory children’s services to deliver information, support and management support to children, young people and their families. Many community-based voluntary sector services are well placed to play a key role in reconnecting children and their families to their community and to build long-term relationships with children and young people.
Staying safe

Safeguarding is not just the responsibility of social care services or even the integrated children’s services. It is the responsibility of the whole community – people, organisations and agencies. We are all responsible for safeguarding.

Statutory agencies have established roles in safeguarding. In relation to personalisation and, in particular, Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support these roles focus on minimising potential risk while enabling a child and family to lead an active, exciting and fun life – one that may sometimes involve risky activities. Concerns are often voiced about safeguarding people who, because they direct their own support, have an increased level of autonomy. These concerns are less about the risks involved in leading an interesting life and more about exposure to people who want to work closely and intimately with children, young people and adults in order to abuse or exploit them.

Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support actively promote intelligent safeguarding and improve people’s safety. They can do this because they promote participation in the life of the local community. People are more visible and known. When backed up with sensible and appropriate vetting and reviewing approaches, Individual Budgets have the potential to deliver a vastly improved safeguarding approach for children.

Within the various ways of managing support plans and the actual budget, there is the potential (as explored by some of In Control’s Member authorities) to address some safeguarding concerns by placing the management of a plan and budget with a responsible children’s service worker. In taking this role, these workers are mirroring the developments over the past four or five years of the Budget Holding Lead Professional. The key factor is that a ‘responsible adult’ manages the Individual Budget in the long term. Safeguarding is one of the considerations that will influence who is best placed to take this role.

Taking a solutions-focused approach to safeguarding and child protection, such as that underpinning SIGNS OF SAFETY³, supports the same basis for Self-Directed Support i.e. the solutions lie within the real wealth surrounding the child, the family and the social capital in the wider community. This is not about challenging either the legal duties of the children’s services or the central role of the professional. It is about looking to real wealth for the solution and in so doing showing how Self-Directed Support can work across contexts, situations and differing support needs.

In a comprehensive approach to safeguarding the essential elements are: placing the ‘voice of the child’ at the centre of the support plan; the ability to cross-reference a support plan with assessments; the focus on delivering outcomes by taking an individual path; and knowing how resources, people and activities will take their part in delivering those outcomes. If this approach to safeguarding is taken, everyone – including the local community and statutory agencies – will be able to safeguard ‘their’ children.

KEY POINTS

- Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support promote participation and visibility within the local community.
- Breadth of involvement in supporting families means all sections of the community can take their part in safeguarding their children.
- Using a solutions-based approach to risk, i.e. seeking the means of resolution within the real wealth of the child and those close to them, shows the applicability of Self-Directed Support across a range of situations and support needs.
- Vetting and oversight will remain a key part of delivering a comprehensive and positive approach to safeguarding.
Personalisation and the whole system

Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support focus on meeting the support needs of a minority of children and young people – those with enduring support needs that cannot be met (at present) within the wider, ‘universal world’. In linking with the early work of Budget Holding Lead Professionals, a wider group of children and young people – those in need of shorter term or smaller scale intervention – is also able to exercise choice and control with the support from a responsible and named adult. However this is, and should remain, an approach that works only for the minority of children and young people.

The greater challenge is to see the ‘universal world’ opened up and made more accessible to many more children and young people including those with more complex support needs.

Much work has been undertaken as part of the AIMING HIGH programme that focused on increasing participation and capacity in the universal offer for disabled children, young people and their families. Such an agenda should, in the long run, see more and more disabled children able to participate in the mainstream. Only those needing a high level of support would require the additional element of an Individual Budget.

This wider agenda involves commissioning and responsibility. It is the role of the commissioner to drive forward the development of an open and accessible universal offer and it is the responsibility of universal services to offer opportunities to the whole local population of children and young people.

Moving into adulthood

This whole-system approach applies beyond childhood. The potential of linking strongly and pro-actively with the adult personalisation agenda is very significant. Within In Control’s Membership authorities, the benefits brought by a whole-life approach are beginning to show themselves. However, we should note that there is a danger that the children’s world could be swamped by the PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST agenda.

A very different approach to transition is emerging:

1. Families have skills developed in support planning with their child and in managing, often with support, an Individual Budget. These skills add to the family’s real wealth.

2. Adult services have a resource allocation system which enables them to make an indicative allocation to anyone deemed eligible for support. Decisions can be taken prior to a young person’s 18th/19th birthday when they move into the world of adult support.

3. The voluntary sector does not have to be organised around age groups. Services based in the voluntary sector that offer support planning, information and management support to families can continue with a relationship post-18, and sow the seeds of a very long-term relationship with a young person and those caring for them.

We can remove many of the issues that cause so many problems for young people moving into the adult world by:

- building on the current adoption of child and person-centred approaches in children’s services
- viewing the support plan as the single document that sets out what all will do and what short- and long-term outcomes will be achieved
- making the transition review just that – a review of the support plan that sets out how the adult Individual Budget will be used.

An approach to transition focused on Self-Directed Support and Individual Budgets will ensure that the young person is at the centre and that services take a back seat.
**KEY POINTS**

- Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support alongside models of Budget Holding Lead Professionals focus on a minority of children and young people.
- The challenge is to open up universal services to a far greater number of children with a much more diverse range of lifestyles and support needs.
- A joined-up approach to Individual Budgets across the ages will have a great impact on transition.
- A joined-up approach across the ages offers a potential long-term relationship between a child and family and those supporting them.
- Voluntary sector partners will be key to building long-term relationships outside of the statutory service world.
Conclusion

This paper sets out the direction of travel being taken by In Control and its Member children’s services.

The paper reflects on the challenges of adopting a self-directed approach across age groups. Here, the notion of ‘self’ is used in a broad sense: a child of three cannot be self-directing but its family can direct support on the child’s behalf. If a child is on the Child Protection Register, a professional takes the role of ensuring the child’s voice is at the centre of support arrangements. We need to keep in mind that, in some situations, what the child and/or their family wants will have to be balanced against considerations of how to keep them safe and resolve current risk.

The section of this paper on ‘a new relationship’ begins a much broader discussion about the nature of the relationship between state, child and family. Does the state view itself as a parent to all children or does it see itself as a co-producer, working alongside the family and child and assuming the role of parent only in a situation where there is a clearly identified need?

The final challenge raised is very important to the understanding of self-direction. There is an important and necessary drive to give children and young people a chance to express themselves and to heed what they are saying. However, paying attention to what children say they want cannot be at the cost of undermining a family’s right and duty to bring up the child in a way that they see fit (safeguarding concerns notwithstanding).

If, as is generally agreed among In Control Members, the best outcome of Self-Directed Support for children is a healthy home environment, we have to see the development of Self-Directed Support for children as an approach that centres on family life and gives families tools to support a healthy childhood and home environment. This aim gives real meaning to an agenda in local authorities to ‘think family’. The EVERY CHILD MATTERS THINK FAMILY protocols is stimulating a growing body of new practice that acknowledges the challenges involved in children’s services and adult services working together to support a family where both children and parents have support needs.

All In Control Members are at the early stages of developing pathways and the underpinning knowledge and practice. We will share what we learn from their experience. This work is about a community of families, children, young people and services learning together. It is about working towards a transformed relationship between state and individual and understanding how all parties promote and support families in directing their lives and the support they and their sons and daughters need.

Supporting families to look to their real wealth, which may include a variety of benefits and perhaps an Individual Budget, is in itself an ‘empowerment agenda’ for all citizens. A new approach is needed, one which makes the necessary investment in Individual Budgets, invests in the real wealth available and opens up the ‘universal world’ to people of all ages whatever support they need. This new approach will encourage self-reliance while cherishing the interdependence of the society in which we all live. In Control will continue to set out a whole-life approach to citizenship and real wealth and show how a transformed relationship between state and individual can underpin a future inclusive, lively and rich community of people.

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March 2010
Notes

Further reading

A Whole Life Approach to Personalisation, Crosby and Duffy, In Control, 2008
Budget Holding Lead Professional Pilots, Office for Public Management, 2008
A Report on In Control's Second Phase (Chapter 4), Crosby, In Control, 2007
Introducing Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support for Children and Families, Crosby and Miller, OPM, 2007

Endnotes

1 Real Wealth Crosby, Duffy, and Murray, 2009
2 Seven Steps – Revised by Brewis, Crosby, Duffy et al, In Control, 2009
   (Graphical Revision kindly shared by Centre for Welfare Reform, 2009: www.centreforwelfarereform.org.uk)
3 Signs of Safety. For more information, visit www.signsofsafety.net/signsofsafety.
   A report detailing work on bringing together Self-Directed Support and Signs of Safety
   will be shared in May 2010
4 Budget Holding Lead Professional Pilots - Learning about change from the BHLP Pilots,
   OPM, June 2008
5 Think Family: A cross government funded initiative supported by the DCSF, Home
   Office, Ministry of Justice, Department of Health and Department for Communities:
   www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/ID91askclient/thinkfamily/tf/