



Oldham
Council

Making a Big Difference

Introducing Personal Budgets to Children with Additional and Complex Needs and their Families in Oldham.

Evaluation of Pilot

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Background

The Special Educational Needs Green Paper

The Special Educational Needs Green Paper raises the expectation that all children/families who need additional support (SEN and Disabilities specifically) will be offered a personal budget by 2014. Oldham, with Rochdale, is one of 20 Green Paper Pathfinders and this Pilot project was to deliver Personal Social Care Budgets from January 2012. The primary objectives were to:

- Develop a Social Care Personal Budget process for eligible children and young people with a disability in Oldham.
- Develop person centred approaches and support planning tools to be embedded in working practises with professionals, particularly within the Additional and Complex Needs Social Work Team.
- Develop links and processes to include health and education components to a personal budget.
- Develop processes/systems in children's personal budgets that will aid a smooth transition to adult's
- Prepare the current market and develop it further in order to meet the needs of families with personal budgets
- Evaluate the success of the process and outcomes after September 2012.
- Make recommendations for the future service development after the Pilot in December 2012.

Pilot Implementation

Oldham started work on the Personal Budget Pilot Scheme for social care in September 2011. Initial work commenced with an information event for families and professionals hosted by Gerry Kelly from 'In Control'. Invites to attend went out to all families who were then accessing the Direct Payments scheme, giving them the opportunity to find out more and to gain interest in being involved in the Personal Budget Pilot. Following this, further information events and meetings with families known to the Social Work Team took place to gain more interest from families who would like to be involved.

Initially the Pilot commenced with four families expressing interest in January 2012. More families joined in the following months leading to a total of ten families finally taking part. However one of the ten opted out at a later stage leaving nine still in the Pilot. Some families who had initially expressed interest in the Pilot opted out for a variety of reasons, these included worries they had regarding taking on the responsibility for their child's budget or a fear of losing current services. Children in the final nine are representative of a diverse range of additional and complex needs and age ranges.

Learning commenced in January 2012 for professionals from the Council and Health as well as interested parents from POINT (Parents of Oldham in Touch) who would be working with families moving into Personal Budgets. This involved a training programme to ensure they could understand the value in person centred planning and to gain knowledge in the use of a range of PCP tools that they could use to work with families.

Most of the work to date has been focused on supporting disabled children and their families. However, from the very early stages, links have been made with the adult self directed support team to ensure that any processes or systems, developed in the children's scheme, are in line with the adult processes. This would aid a smooth transition and avoid any past issues arising in the transitions process for families.

From an early stage Oldham realised that, to enable families to have choice and control in the services for their child, the market place needed to evolve to better meet this need and to provide good quality and cost effective support for their children. To address this, a tender process was entered into to create the first stage of a preferred providers list. This gives families the confidence that the organisations on the list have been fully checked to ensure they meet a clear set of care standards for children. Alongside this, current providers from the statutory, private and voluntary sectors have had opportunities to attend workshops and events to find out more about the potential impact of Individual Budgets and how best to prepare to meet the needs of families for long term viability. All current services have worked to provide full unit costs for their services to enable families to better cost out their Support Plans.

The Evaluation Approach

Parents

To ensure on-going evaluation to aid development, regular meetings took place with the families in the Pilot and members of the Social Work Team who supported these developments.

The parent meetings were quite informal to ensure that parents felt confident enough to voice their opinions. In some cases parents also brought with them an advocate or friend to support them. Each meeting addressed concerns families had and also gave them the opportunity to share good news stories and any new providers they had found.

Meeting topics included:

- Resource Allocation System (**RAS**) assessment tool – strengths/weaknesses.
- Person Centred Planning and Support Plans.
- Whole process from RAS to resource panel to indicative budget to implementation and timescales.
- Market development.

- What is in and not in a budget and why.
- The future for Personal budgets, after the pilot.
- Concerns regarding long term budget allocations.
- Overall perspective on the use of a Personal Budget to meet their child's needs.

Professionals

More formal meetings also took place with the Social Work Team and other professionals from the Additional and Complex Needs Teams, in particular Netherhey St Short Breaks Unit. The topics covered were similar to those discussed with families as well as:

- Timescales for processes.
- Staff capacity in Team to deliver long term.
- Difficulties regarding payment set up.
- Age banding for the RAS assessment.
- RAS suitability to assess need effectively.
- Contracts - between Authority and family.
- Monitoring and concerns re: parental capacity to manage appropriately.
- Equipment e.g. IPADS and the need for further assessment of child.
- Policy requirements

Team Managers

Head of ACN Service: Gary McBrien,
 Short Breaks and Transformation Manager: Julie Hawkins,
 ACN Social Work Team Manager: Melanie Maguire,
 ACN Social Work Senior Practitioner: Chris Turner
 Netherhey St Manager: Mark Hatton.

Formal meetings were held to assess progress and identify concerns/issues. Many of the above topics were discussed plus:

- Pound per point allocations.
- Equipment and lack of policy to cover, within a Personal Budget.
- Need for overarching policy regarding Personal Budgets and wider resource allocation.
- Long term implications for Service budget.
- What can be included, what cannot and what may be included with negotiation.

Providers

Regular quarterly meetings held with current providers including those now on the new Preferred Providers list for personal budgets.

Meetings discussed the need for providers to get ready for the changing market and ways in which they could be market ready. Also any issues encountered with families moving into the Pilot scheme, such as charging and unit costing.

Perspectives from the Families

Parents who opted out

Reasons for opt out varied and happened at different stages of the process, reasons included:

- Really don't understand, the process seems too complicated.
- I didn't realise that I would be become an employer and have to deal with tax!
- Too much responsibility.
- 'It seemed like a good idea when I first started the process and I enjoyed the Path, but when it came to creating the support plan I couldn't see how I would be any better off, and I am happy with the services my child is receiving.'

Parents who stayed in the Pilot

Overall, families who stayed with the Pilot felt that for them personal budgets were a positive step. Most felt that their family's lives had improved by having a Personal Budget and the plans they had in place. There were common experiences, as set out below.

Key Findings

- The Personal Budget process is only as good as the Social Worker involved.
- RAS process was liked by families they felt that it was clear and captured the needs of the child well.
- The Path planning was a wonderful and positive experience
- The Path is about the whole family but the Plan is only written about the child although there can be implications for other children and the family as a whole.
- Some parents felt that the Path (person centre planning tool) was extremely helpful. It encouraged them to look at things more creatively and it was very useful to have outsiders looking in and offering their input.
- Some parents found that the Path process did not helped them to create the end support plan.
- The Path planning raised parental expectations.

- It needs to be clear at the outset what the PB can and cannot be used for.
- It was suggested that there should be a list for using in the Path planning so that everyone is clear what can and can't be included with reasons as to why.
- Parents feel that it would be useful for someone who has been involved in devising the Path to attend the Panel meeting to which it is presented. This way the request can be justified and background be given rather than the Panel just looking at the bottom line.
- Clear feedback should be given to parents following the Panel meeting. All decisions should be explained clearly and promptly.
- A big problem is the financial side of things. The actual money side is holding up the process and causing problems for families wanting to utilise their budget. The money is not being released and parents can not rely on goodwill to pay people.
- It can cost £10 per week to employ someone to do the accounts and audit side of the process. Should PB money be used for this purpose?
- The Personal Budget is only one method of funding. Parents need to be made aware that there are other funding streams available and that the Path can be a good way of looking at these as part of whole picture.
- Ideas and knowledge can come out of the Path that may not be part of the Support Plan.
- Parents put a lot of emotion into the Path planning process and this is not always evident in the written document that is presented to Panel.
- The child's needs are not always able to be timetabled on a weekly or daily basis. Parents accept that they have to be identified but that it must be accepted that needs are changeable and there needs to be a degree of flexibility.
- A change in Social Worker can cause a problem for parents possibly changing a positive experience into a negative one. New Social Workers can have a different approach and ideas and can question the decisions made by their predecessor even though they have been agreed.

Parent's Thoughts for Moving Forward

- A more age related RAS. Possibly 0-12 and 12-18.
- An advocate to attend Panel to put the support plan forward – Social Worker, Family or LD Nurse.
- Panel to have a clear process to make consistent decisions regarding support plans.
- Better communication and information.
- A list of what is in and what is out of a potential personal budget.
- More training for staff.
- An equal and universal process.
- The process must be about the family not the Social Worker.
- Parents need to have confidence in the system and the personnel.
- Must be an holistic approach with the child at the centre.
- The Personal Budget process has to fit into the Single Plan framework.
- The outcomes must be tailored to meet the child/family's needs.
- Professionals and families need to have a realistic view of the process.

Reflections from Workers Involved

Key Findings

- 'At first it seemed really difficult and I really couldn't get it but now it is all starting to make sense.'
- A general appreciation of how the Personal Budget process changes the working relationship and how it feels working together with a family.
- The amount of learning that the team have had to embrace and then support families with.
- Some workers have welcomed the new approaches others have been nervous and found the changes difficult.
- Most could see the positives for the families in the process.

What worked well?

- Completing the RAS with a family and aiding in the Path process felt like a joint piece of work throughout, rather than something I was doing to the family.
- I learnt such a lot as part of the Path process. It was great to spend time with the family and child asking them what they would like to do and support them to think outside the box.
- Process is evolving – an ongoing learning process and feels like we are all in it together, for and with the families.

What didn't work/could have been better?

- Clearer guidelines about the process i.e. from RAS completion to full implementation of Plan.
- Clearer guidance about what can and cannot be included in a plan to get approval. Not having this in the Pilot led to a complaint from a family.
- Time issue on top of existing workload. Worried that I, and the rest of the Team, will not be able to cope.
- Finance – not much help from Finance re: systems to implement payment for families-very frustrating.
- Some of the RAS questions are open to interpretation.
- There were some difficulties and delays in getting started for a few families.
- More information needed on how flexible these budgets can be and how they will link up with Health and Education.
- Workers really need to make sure that the child does not get lost in the process and that the plan reflects the child's identified assessed need.
- The Plan must take into account what the child needs not necessarily what the parents wants.
- I still have some concerns about safeguarding and hope that there will be very strong policies in place to protect children.
- I still have concerns that the budgets could be abused.

The Future.....

- I hope it rolls out to all families but that I do not have to set them all up!
- It is so refreshing to see positive outcomes for families.
- It would be sad if this stopped.
- It has been very positive for families and I can see the benefits.
- There has already been a lot of change in the way the Team work and I can see that if Personal Budgets are fully rolled out then there will need to be lots more.
- Information needs to be clearer, transparent and simple for families and professionals.
- Need the people in power to have an understanding of what Person Centred Planning is and embrace it.

Viewpoint from Managers

- Still need to assess if the RAS is really capturing needs appropriately and is suitable for long term roll out.
- Need to agree on RAS and pound per point based on projections. This must be in place before the full roll out of personal social care budgets in April 2013.
- Need to decide if age banding will be applied and how?
- Need to be sure that the Children's ACN budget is sustainable for future roll out of Personal Budgets.
- To do this we will need to ensure that all families are treated fairly and equally. This will mean costing all current packages and completing a desktop RAS exercise for eligible children. This will ensure that whether families opt in or out of Budgets neither will gain an unfair advantage or be disadvantaged.
- Need to establish clear policies in particular for areas such as equipment.

Perspective from Providers

- Some reported that they had been approached by families on the Pilot to cost out what they could use to meet the needs of their child. This is a new way of being commissioned and not the big contracts we have been used to. I think we are going to have to give some more thought to the way the market is changing as the parents will be paying us directly in future and will this have an effect on our prices due to the uncertainty in payment.
- A couple of the providers have noticed that families have approached some of their staff to do PA work away from their usual work. This could be an issue for us but realise that we may need to look at ways for us to support this so we do not lose good workers.
- New providers on the Preferred List have been busy promoting themselves in Oldham ready for families who commence Personal Budgets when fully implemented. We realise it may take some time for the demand to grow but if we get ourselves known with social workers and families we will be in a better position to grow our market share.
- Some of the in house short breaks providers have started to look at ways to diversify their current work so they can be flexible to families needs. 'This is challenging as we do not yet know what the demand will be but realise that we need to be ready'.
- I think we will have to build in some conditions with families like a contract such as a one month notice period. Otherwise we could go out of business if they change their mind after their child has commenced a service with us.

Health Links and Developments

Oldham's Health Authority is part of the national Pilot to implement Personal Health Budgets. Originally the area they had targeted was patients with dementia, however due to the LA also working on a Pilot for budgets in children's social care they decided to include children in their plans. Although they have engaged with families and have had interest shown, none have so far taken up a Personal Health Budget. Reasons behind this no take up have included:

- Child dying.
- Families feeling the system is too complicated and meant too much responsibility for them.
- Families feeling that the choices they had were very limited due to the stringent Health guidelines for care in place.

Health have struggled with capacity due to limited funding and staff resources to carry out support planning so this has not aided the take up from families.

Health staff have been involved in some of the work with families in the social care Pilot and have also had access to the person centred planning training commissioned by the LA.

Regular meetings have taken place with the two projects leads from Health and LA in which developments and issues in both areas have been shared.

Discussions have taken place and plans are being developed to work on systems that will support the introduction of dual health and social budget with a potential family already identified.

Education Links and Developments

The DFE announced in January 2012 that Pathfinder Authorities could test out the potential for Direct Payments in Education. Since then discussions have been held with the Access Team and also with Headteachers to find some schools willing to take part in a Pilot. Parents have also been invited to discuss the potential that Direct Payments in Education could have for them. A small project steering group was set up including professionals from Social Care, Health, Finance, Education, HR and Parent's Representatives. This group aimed to focus on the education component of a personal budget and to discuss concerns and issues raised. Discussions regarding what could be in and what would not be in have led to the following scope for a Direct Payment in Education:

Areas that are to be included:

- Transport
- TA support

Areas that may be in but with negotiation are:

- Equipment
- Teacher Time
- Additional support services e.g. VI, HI, Quest

Areas that will not be included

- Therapies

This is mainly due to the fact that therapies are funded via Health and as yet there is no agreement in place.

Initially the children we will be looking at in the Pilot are only those with a Statement or EHC Plan. The work will start in the schools that have already expressed an interest in working with us and will take the form of a virtual budget exercise. Initially there will be up to four children from each school that have already had conversations with the families. Alongside this work we will also be working on a framework that will support families to have more involvement in the recruitment and selection of TA's supporting their child that will address some of the concerns schools have regarding health and safety, insurances and management of staff on their premises. This framework would also address some of parents concerns regarding training and sickness implications.

This work will commence in January 2013.

Schools that have expressed interest to be involved in the pilot are as follows:

- Newbridge Special Secondary
- Kingfisher Special Primary
- Higher Failsworth Primary
- Horten Mill Primary
- Radclyffe Secondary
- North Chadderton Secondary
- Failsworth Secondary
- Kingsland (PRU)

Summary

The Personal Budget Social Care Pilot has been a major learning experience for all those involved. For the families who stayed with the pilot it has, in most cases, been a positive experience and their comments and work with the Authority has helped to shape the programme for the future.

Worker's comments are typical of feedback generally and although there are still some concerns more of the workers are now starting to see the positives to the process. Workers have expressed concerns about their workload and capacity to engage in these developments. Workload and capacity will need to be looked at for the long term roll out and an action plan will need to be put in place to alleviate some of strain on the Team.

Health Budgets have proved difficult to pilot in Oldham due to a number of factors not least the need to meet health's stringent guidelines for care. However Health has worked alongside the Social Care Team and are still looking to trail Personal Health Budgets and to work on developing a system that will support dual or tripartite budgets.

Education Direct Payments have created lots of discussion in the Schools, Access Team, Finance and HR due to the complexities of parents employing staff who could be working in a school setting. For example who manages the worker day to day and how would they be covered by insurances?

Many Authorities in the Pathfinder scheme have opted to just look at the Transport component of Education which would appear to be an easy area to address in a Pilot. Oldham however have looked at the SEND draft legislation that states *'using the new power established in the Education Act 2011, this will include the use of direct payments for education as well as health and social care support'* (DFE 2012).

Clearly this highlights education in its broadest sense, not just transport, which is not the main focus of any child's education. Oldham took the viewpoint that the child's time in the education setting needs to be addressed in the Direct Payment Pilot to ensure we gain relevant learning before full implementation. Taking this viewpoint has meant that more time was required to ascertain the direction we would take to establish the Pilot group. We have taken the time to discuss with relevant parties including parents and the schools so that, once the Pilot commences, parents and schools will feel they have every opportunity to be involved in creating a framework that should support roll out effectively.

The Future

The key to much of the success in the Social Care Pilot has been the investment and time made into workers involved in particular with regard to the person centred planning approaches. This has resulted in growing confidence in most of the workers which, in turn, has had a positive impact on the support families received. The need for dedicated time and training became even more apparent for some of the families when new workers, who had not received training, became involved in their budgets. This resulted in some negative experiences for families.

Interesting aspects that have started to appear in developments are in the impact personalisation is having on Providers. The Providers have needed to reassess their working practices, services available and methods of engagement with families. The developments need to be further enhanced and plans for change need to move forward at quite a pace in order to be ready for the full implementation and to meet families' needs.

The Pilot has afforded Oldham a strong base on which to build and move forward. The next things to consider are how we can replicate the positives in the full implementation of Social Care Personal Budgets, maintain the same quality and extend the offer of personalisation to all young people and families incorporating the Local Authority, Health and Education.

To be ready for full implementation for all families to have an option of Personal budget, key areas will need to be given consideration and developed:

- Personal Budgets and wider resource allocation policy
- Contingency funds
- Appeals process
- Prepayment cards/ accountancy-audits
- Infra structure to support personalisation –aligned/pooled budgets
- Team capacity to support long term
- Parents as Support Brokers –need to revisit
- Further increase in market development

Need to ensure all senior leaders and council members are fully informed of developments and potential implications personalisation will bring.

Implications: as the system changes and support packages are reviewed and notional budgets based on the RAS are put in place to ensure a consistent and transparent approach for all families. This could create a potential rise in complaints as some services are withdrawn from families due to changes in circumstances and **current** assessed needs of child.