

Self-Directed Support: The Role of Support Brokerage within Individual Budgets

This paper sets out some of the key considerations regarding the role of Support Brokerage within the processes of the Individual Budgets Pilot Programme. In recognition of the complexities involved in the Support Brokerage process, the following is intended to provide an update of good practice to date and to further enable pilot sites to consolidate current success, as follows:

1. Self-Directed Support and wider contexts
2. Initial definitions and descriptions of the functions associated with brokerage
3. Emerging themes and issues within the process
4. Modelling options and suggestions for action planning
5. CSIP next steps

Section 1: Self-Directed Support and wider context

The Individual Budgets Programme is taking place in the context of other important policy initiatives. One of these is the report produced by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit in January 2005 **Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People**. The overall aim of this report is to ensure that

“By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society.”

The Individual Budgets pilot programme is complemented by other recommendations in 'Life Chances' that will help to achieve this and have a connection with the thinking and action on Support Brokerage. In particular, recommendation 4.3 states:

“By 2010, each locality (defined as that area covered by a council with social services responsibilities) should have a user led organisation modelled on existing Centres for Independent Living.”

Amongst other things the organisations should provide at a minimum:

- Information and advice
- Advocacy and peer support
- Assistance with self assessment
- Support in using Individual Budgets

- Support to recruit and employ personal assistants

Because of the potential significance of this recommendation, this will form one of the key additional areas of support being offered by CSIP in 2007. Sites have already received an invitation to be part of this stream of work and there are more details about this below. In addition, more recently the DH has announced the introduction of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) which are being established to create a system where more people are empowered to be active partners in their health and social care rather than passive recipients.

A Stronger Local Voice published in July 2006, sets out the Governments plans to achieve these aims. As part of these plans, Local Authorities with social service responsibilities will have a statutory duty to make arrangements for the establishment of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs). These LINKs will bring together local people and organisations and are intended to provide flexible ways for communities to engage with health and social care organisations to help shape services and priorities in ways that best suit the communities and the people in them.

At this stage, it is not clear how these new agencies will overlap with the thinking about Support Brokerage but it seems likely that there will be areas of common interest.

Section 2: Initial definitions and descriptions of the functions associated with brokerage

We do not think that it would be helpful to set out one model of brokerage or to rigidly specify the tasks which make up brokerage. However, we have set out what we think are the underpinning features of effective brokerage that can be applied to the Individual Budget pilot process. These are that:

- The person for whom the brokerage is provided makes the decision (with assistance if needed) about how resources are used;
- The provision of information about the range of brokerage options is a central part of enabling choice and control;
- Information should be provided in the format best suited to the individual;
- Support Brokerage has a clear value base – to promote self determination.

There has been much discussion about the connected ideas of brokerage, support brokerage, advocacy and self-advocacy. There are some useful papers setting out some of the different definitions and other associated issues on the in Control website – www.in-control.org.uk.

One way of looking at this issue is to look at the tasks that could be included under the heading Support Brokerage. A recent discussion paper from West Sussex¹ (available on the in Control website) offers some helpful definitions

¹ Discussion Paper: Describing Self Directed Support Services, 2006, West Sussex County Council.

about the functions that might be included which we have drawn on significantly to set out the functions below:

1. Researching what is available

Helping someone find out what is available and to think about the advantages and disadvantages of the different choices available, from the individual's point of view.

2. Information-giving (or Signposting)

This is simply giving someone the facts they need in order to make their own decisions.

3. Technical advice-giving

Providing information and advice on issues that need specific knowledge or experience e.g.

- Decisions about equipment
- How to recruit personal assistants
- Home ownership and other housing options

4. Informal support

Many people will benefit from the help of family or friends to help them plan their arrangements. In most cases, this will be available at no cost to the person or the Local Authority, although sometimes these supporters will need backup or technical advice and information.

5. Day to Day Management

Providing some, or all of the practical assistance in running a budget. For example, in relation to holding an account, paying bills and keeping records. It may or may not include a Payroll service where the person opts to use their budget to employ Personal Assistants.

6. Support Needs Planning

Some people will want and need assistance to develop their support plan and to put this into practice. This activity will link closely to Support Brokerage. There are a range of different ways that people may use to develop plans. These include:

- Completing this themselves;
- Being part of a small group of other people who are also developing their own support plans;
- Working with a circle of support of group of people that the individual chooses to help them develop their support plan.

There are a range of resources that people involved in the planning can use. These include:

- Guides to support planning and supporting materials;
- Graphic templates that can be used on a one to one basis, or with a circle/small group of people, or as part of Planning Live.

www.supportplanning.org

7. Advocacy

In a recent paper written by the Disability Rights Commission, **Delivering the Choice and Voice Agenda: the role of independent advocacy services** (August 2006), a definition of Advocacy is provided:

“Advocacy can be defined as an individual being supported to express views, communicate choices and receive services or participation as a result. It promotes social inclusion and equality”.

There have been a number of other attempts to clearly define Support Brokerage and how it differs from, for example, Advocacy.

The DRC paper describes different types of advocacy as follows:

- Citizen advocacy: Citizen advocates are usually volunteers and often act to ensure the rights of the person they work for are enforced.
- Self-advocacy: Where people are enabled to set up groups to support each other to speak up about their views and choices, regardless of how they communicate.
- Peer advocacy: Closely linked to self-advocacy is where a person with certain experiences supports another person with similar experiences to make their views known and to have their views respected and acted on.
- Professional Advocacy: Where a person is supported by a paid advocate employed by a service such as the health service Independent Complaints Advocacy Service or the forthcoming Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy Service.

These definitions help us get a clearer idea of the range of functions that can be included in thinking about these issues but our suggested approach also includes a wider role for Support Brokerage.

For the purposes of our approach to Support Brokerage, we **propose** the following definition:

“Support Brokerage involves the assistance that people need to work out what their choices will be, and the support required to make it happen.”

Section 3: Emerging themes and issues within the process

The first national meeting of pilot sites on Brokerage issues took place on 6th October 2006. This gave us an opportunity to look at the experience in the sites to date and to agree areas that needed further work.

The key themes that have emerged to date include:

- Support Brokerage thinking is being applied to the full range of people involved in the Individual Budgets pilots
- A number of sites have run sessions for staff and others on their approach to Support Brokerage
- Many of the sites have developed Support Brokerage capacity through a combination of ‘in-house’ resources and some externalising to outside agencies

- A number of the sites have developed good working relationships with organisations of Disabled People as partners in delivering Support Brokerage
- Where people with learning disabilities are involved in the pilots, the 'cultural' acceptance of ideas of self assessment and person-centred planning, seem easier than for some other groups of people
- A range of different agencies have been brought in to help sites think through their work on Support Brokerage
- Some sites have developed some very innovative approaches to Support Brokerage including the front-end allocation of resources as part of the RAS to support people in their planning and Support Brokerage requirements
- The involvement of user-led external agencies on the basis of delivering a greater range of choices for Support Brokerage.

In addition a number of key issues are emerging that require further consideration:

- What do we need to do to make sure that the quality of the Support Brokerage provided is as high as possible?
- Who pays for Support Brokerage and how can we make the continued provision of Support Brokerage financially sustainable?
- How can we identify and work with user-led and other voluntary organisations/community groups to develop Support Brokerage?
- How can we promote understanding of Support Brokerage?
- How can we make sure that Support Brokerage is available in the right way for everyone?

Section 4: Modelling options and suggestions for action planning

We are proposing a mixed model of 'community based brokerage' that nurtures creativity, common-sense and sustainability. It is strongly linked to support planning to help people work out what they want to happen in their lives and different ways of getting support to make it happen. There should be a range of options for Support Brokerage. People should have as much control as they can over the brokerage support they get.

We think brokerage can be simultaneously developed in 5 connected but distinct areas:

- Individuals and their families
- Neighbourhoods and local networks
- 'User-led' organisations, for example, Centres for Independent Living
- Key workers, care staff and care managers
- Paid brokers advocates and advice givers

Individuals and their families

Many people will simply require easily accessible information and advice to go ahead on a 'do it yourself' basis. Often helped by their family and friends, people will want to take the lead in working out what they want to happen in their lives and how to make it happen using their Individual Budget to achieve

this. People and their families will often be best placed to act as their own brokers but they should have the choice of being able to access knowledgeable, expert additional support should they wish to or if needs and circumstances change.

Neighbourhoods and Local Networks

Neighbourhoods will often contain a rich array of skill and resources. People can identify effective community support from those that they know, their inside knowledge of who's doing what in the area. There are often people who operate as focal points in a neighbourhood. They probably won't think of themselves as 'brokers' but they can be a real resource.

Although some communities are active and effective at making connections to support neighbours and others living in the area, some people have few friends and/or family – or none at all. In these situations, paid or more formal brokers could have a role to play in helping to build these networks for one person at a time.

Proposed Action: In partnership with people and families, to develop ways in which you make sure that you nurture and grow networks that will enable people to be able to go to others with similar experiences for their advice, support and help with getting what they want in their lives.

The contribution of User-led organisations

Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People points to a growing role for disabled peoples' organisations in helping people to achieve greater choice and control.

There is a lot to learn from local disabled and older peoples' organisations that have built up much experience helping people to exercise choice and control over their lives.

Agencies run by disabled people, older people or any other self-help group are well placed to provide essential advice and guidance and are also able to source experienced mentors to cover the whole range of brokerage tasks.

Centres for Independent Living and other user-led organisations have the potential to take a lead role in co-ordinating the full range of supports and information services that will enable disabled people, regardless of the nature of their personal impairment, to make effective use of an individual budget in their own community.

Proposed Action: To work with the user led organisations in your area to develop their capacity and skills to be able to take on a support brokerage role for a diverse range of people. Pilot sites may wish to collaborate to support a programme of training.

Key Workers, Care Staff and Care Managers

A key to effective brokerage can sometimes be the personal trust through an existing relationship or a personal recommendation. Some people will have this trusting relationship with staff who are already in their lives. Many aspects

of the brokerage role could be carried out by paid staff. It is important though that people know what other brokerage options are available to them so that the choice to use paid staff is an informed and positive one.

Some people express reservations that the lack of independence of staff who are directly involved with people means that they can not play a brokerage role. There can certainly be a tension in some roles e.g. Care Manager, where it could be difficult to exercise a brokerage role and still be the person who decides the level of resources allocated. Our view is that this choice belongs to the individual. The most important thing is for the people to make their own informed choice.

Where paid staff in agencies do take on this role in addition to other roles they and their agencies have a responsibility to make sure they really do have relevant and wide ranging knowledge and experience beyond that of their employing organisation. Employing Agencies must also be prepared to consider what they can do to make sure the potential for conflicts of interest are reduced.

Paid Brokers, Advocates and Advice Givers

Some people and families will want someone to help them who is a professional paid broker. Appointing a paid broker is a valid option at any stage of the planning process.

Many advocacy and brokerage tasks are so similar that it is clear that both are natural allies in the task of ensuring that people who use services gain control over their own lives. Some advocates and advocacy agencies are confident that they can work effectively as brokers, others do not feel this is part of their role. This will need to be considered at the local level.

Proposed Action: To support the development of support brokerage and to influence the quality of paid brokers through supporting training initiatives and the networking of paid brokers into best practice networks.

Pilot sites may wish to link with the National Brokerage Network or national Advocacy agencies such as Action for Advocacy or OPAAL, to explore the development of a paid brokerage market locally.

Section 5: CSIP next steps

Following our national meeting in October 2006, we have been developing plans to focus on some specific areas of work.

Involving 'user-led' organisations

We are working with NCIL and a range of partner agencies to develop the role of user-led organisations in supporting the development of Support Brokerage in ways which allow people to use Individual Budgets successfully.

The first meeting of sites involved in this programme of work took place in January 2007 and involved setting out local plans of action to take this work forward.

Community Capacity Building

We are commissioning a project which will allow pilot sites to look at mapping community resources and maximising the use of the full range of community based assets which will allow people to be fully involved in their own local neighbourhoods. This work should start in March.

The National Brokerage Network is currently creating working links with the Skills for Care brokerage initiative to look at core materials, skills and knowledge that can make up a rolling programme of broker training.

Gathering examples of good practice

We will be commissioning a piece of work to identify good practice in Support Brokerage going on in pilot sites, in Control sites and other areas.

Site Meetings/Other forms of support

At the meeting in October 2006, we agreed to ask sites early in 2007, what further work would be useful, in addition to the specific projects set out above.

This might involve further national meetings to share emerging experience and good practice, opportunities to share ideas and issues arising on specific topics. This could be through e-based forums such as the knowledge community or through national or regional meetings.

Other issues

There a number of emerging key themes and issues outlined in section 3, pages 4 and 5. These have been identified from the work of the sites so far, and from an identification of broader issues. These will have significant impact on the emerging role and functions associated with support brokerage, and the longer term aim of ensuring the Government's vision as described in **Life Chances** can be delivered.

We will be exploring the best ways of taking these issues forward, in discussion with the pilot sites.

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CSIP

Resources

The National Brokerage Network

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