

## Getting started on Putting People First

The Government and other partners today have released 'Putting People First: A shared vision and commitment to the transformation of adult social care.' It acknowledges that the existing social care system is in need of reform to meet the challenges both now and in the future; and it is prepared to provide funding, £3.5m on average per top tier authority, in order to help achieve this.

The paper states that existing social care systems 'can be over complex and too often fail to respond to people's needs and expectations'. It sees adult social care leading the way for transformation in local authorities, suggesting that while some reforms are 'within the parameters of the adult social care policies', others require social care to lead change across public services and in local communities.

This will be an exciting, but challenging time for local authorities. Not being dictated to by central Government will allow for local innovation, but will also require local authorities to take big decisions, balancing risk with the desire to give citizens as much choice and control as is possible.

Personal budgets and self directed support are seen as key parts of this vision. Quite rightly, choice and control are key drivers for this change. The terms 'individual budgets' 'personal budgets' and 'self directed support' have now been around for sometime. What these actually mean at a local level is a more complex question than it might first appear.

The paper states that 'system wide transformation' should include the following in relation to self directed support:

- A common assessment process of individual social care needs with a greater emphasis on self-assessment. Social workers spending less time on assessment and more on support, brokerage and advocacy.
- Person centred planning and self directed support to become mainstream and define individually tailored support packages. Tele-care to be viewed as integral not marginal.
- Personal budgets for everyone eligible for publicly funded adult social care support other than in circumstances where people require emergency access to provision. Lord Darzi's recent NHS next stage review interim report suggested that in the future personal budgets for people with longterm conditions could include NHS resources.

Encompassed in these three paragraphs is a fundamental re-shaping of the adult social care system. As well as managing budgets via an entirely new system based on a collective assessment of local need, local authorities have some fundamental questions to answer, such as:

- **How wide should personal budgets go?** Some services will always sit outside personal budgets, such as management overheads, prevention



and re-ablement and adult protection. Local authorities will need to scope out exactly what this means for them.

- ➔ **What does successful implementation really mean?** Just offering a personal budget will not be enough. Genuine improvement in outcomes and increase in choice and control are the objectives, but these are hard to measure.
- ➔ **How should this align with other change initiatives?** Self directed support could drive the entirety of social care reform, or it could more simply form a part of a wider transformation programme. Links with partners like PCTs will need to be carefully defined in practice.
- ➔ **How fast is change possible?** There will be a range of practical barriers to fast implementation from cultural change, to block contracts and in-house provision.

Once these questions have been answered, local authorities will then need to consider what their role in various aspects of social care will be, such as assessment, commissioning, organising support and quality assurance. This is a radical change from the existing way of providing social care and will need strong leadership from both senior managers and elected members to ensure this is successful.

iMPOWER believes that the next few years will be both one of the most exciting, but also one of the most challenging times for local authorities.

If you are interested in hearing more about how iMPOWER is helping local authorities to deliver self directed support, please contact us on 020 7017 8030 or e-mail [jcooper@impower.co.uk](mailto:jcooper@impower.co.uk).

