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Gaining Independence
An Evaluation of Service Users' Accounts of
the Individual Budgets Pilot

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An Evaluation of Service Users' Accounts of the Individual Budgets Pilot

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Aims of the Evaluation

- whether and to what extent service users are engaged in the Council's Individual Budgets scheme
- barriers to service user participation
- effective mechanisms in promoting service user involvement
- other barriers to the effectiveness of the promotion of Independent Budgets
- general views of those involved in Individual Budgets Pilot

Context

- 13 local authorities chosen to pilot the introduction of individual budgets during 2006-2008.
- national pilot programme evaluated through the Individual Budgets Evaluation Network (IBSEN).
- national research project aims:
 - experiences and outcomes for service users
 - resourcing and management
 - cost effectiveness, workload management, training, legal and professional issues
 - Randomised Controlled Trial - hard data with nationwide validity.

Context

- choice
- independence
- personalisation
- outcomes-based care
- direct payments
- individual budgets
- personal budgets

Learning From Previous Studies (1)

- develop and manage social care markets effectively
- commission social care effectively
- develop effective partnership working
- develop an understanding and raise the profile of individual budgets

Learning From Previous Studies (2)

- overcome various barriers including attitude of certain local authorities and social care professionals
- promote outcomes focused social care
- ensure users are empowered
- ensure real choice is provided

METHODOLOGY (1)

Aims

- capture service users' and carers' thoughts and experiences
- empower the service users to tell their own stories in ways that were meaningful to them.

METHODOLOGY (2)

Sample

- all service users were 'in transition' from one care setting to another
- 44 service users in the Pilot
- 30 service users participated in the evaluation
- 19 male, 11 female
- third – 16-18 years, third 19-25, third over 25
- vulnerable individuals with additional communication needs

METHODOLOGY (3)

Approach

- action research

Methods

- one-to-one support sessions with researchers
- use of computers to create 'blogs'
- dictaphones
- PowerPoint presentations
- posters and artwork
- group artwork project
- film
- observation of service users

Evaluation Findings

Benefits

- service users able to set the agenda
- increased choice and autonomy over how their needs were met
- able to grow and develop holistically
- Increased flexibility of service provision
- service users are more fully part of the community

Setting the agenda (1)

The Individual Budget pilot has allowed [my] needs and aspirations to be understood in a way that a traditional assessment would not allow. In the past [my] ability to perform tasks would be the main focus of an assessment and the consequences of doing the task would not be considered. (service user)

Setting the agenda (2)

So we intend to employ a personal assistant who will support him in a person-centred way, putting his needs first, and promoting his well-being (family)

Setting the agenda (3)

The Individual Budget gives us the flexibility to use the resources we have as and when we need them
(parents)

For example E does not always go out for the same number of hours every week – social lives are not always predictable
(parents)

Holistic Growth - physical, emotional and spiritual (1)

I prefer living in the new house because I do not have to do everything in a group and I am also allowed to do more things for myself. I feel like more of an individual.
(service user)

*The money from the Individual Budget means I can live here I'm much happier here than where I lived before because ... this is **my** flat and I am supported to live here independently.* **(service user)**

Holistic Growth - physical, emotional and spiritual (2)

My sister and I get on better now since I have moved into my new house because we spend more quality time together and she is not just my carer now. (service user)

Challenges

- varied levels of knowledge and awareness of Individual Budgets
- difficulties experienced by some service users in obtaining an Individual Budget or available services
- difficulties in securing adequate supply of good care staff
- need to be skilled up in order to take on the responsibilities of being an Individual Budget holder
- need for supply to become more flexible and responsive
- need for professionals to recognise to a greater extent that their roles are changing

Suggested Developments

- effective advocacy services and support
- database of available care staff*
- support/assistance for service users and families in taking on roles of an employer
- effective communication between departments
- agencies work in partnership
- aligned funding streams
- real work opportunities developed
- appropriate housing supply

Overall Findings

Coventry City Council's Individual Budgets Pilot has been a very positive development:

- independence
- family roles
- promoting person-centred, outcomes focused support

*the process of getting an IB....has been hard at times
.... But having it has helped me to become more
independent*