

ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 25th OCTOBER 2011

EXTERNAL BROKERAGE SERVICES

Report from the Director for Social & Community Services

Introduction

Members will be aware that the Council is currently working through an ambitious programme to transform the way adult social care is provided. This work is promoting a more personal approach to care and support where an individual who is eligible for support will be allocated a Personal Budget. An individual will then have a choice about how their support is arranged and provided. This new approach is known as Self Directed Support.

Social & Community Services undertook a Learning Exercise in the north of the county from December 2008 to help develop Self-Directed Support. This included trialling Support Brokerage from a selection of providers. In September 2009 an Evaluation Report recommended the provision of a Brokerage function by external providers from October 2010 onwards.

The Transforming Adult Social Care (TASC) Programme Board subsequently concluded that external Support Brokerage should be a major feature of the new Self-Directed Support model, and that this should be effective from October 2010.

A procurement exercise was undertaken and contracts for a period of 3 years with options to extend for up to 3 additional years (up to 2016) were awarded to two providers as follows.

Hours per Annum				
Provider/Client Group	Older People	Learning Disability	Physical Disability	Totals
Age UK Oxfordshire	10,000		3,300	13,300
Advance	5,400	3,300		8,700
Total	15,400	3,300	3,300	22,000

The contracts have been constructed to provide flexibility and allow for an increase in hours up to 58,000 hours/year within the life of the contract. Any increase requires 3 months notice.

How Support Brokerage fits within the Self Directed Support System

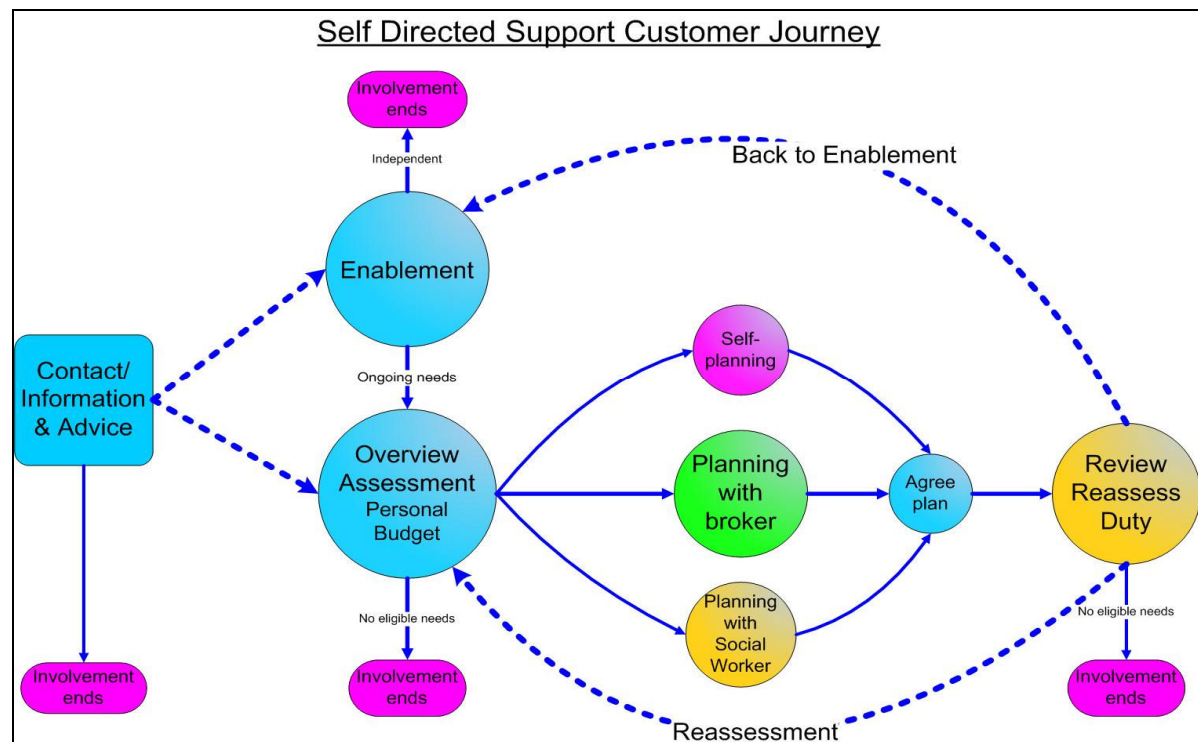
Support Brokerage involves the provision of advice and information to individuals and their family members/friends/carers. This enables individuals to make choices about their care and support.

Our view is that the majority of support plans need to be developed independently of Adult Social Care either through an independent broker, by the individual or with the support of a family member or friend.

The process undertaken is:

- An individual will be assessed to determine their eligible needs.
- The indicative Personal Budget is then calculated using the findings from the overview assessment.
- The client is then asked which brokerage route they wish to take
- People are encouraged to go to an external broker although they may opt to have this function provided by a family member or this Directorate.
- A broker will then work with the individual to explore and draw up a support plan to meet their identified needs.
- The support plan is then signed off by the social worker and the Individual. This ensures that adult social care is satisfied that the plan meets the needs of the individual.
- The broker helps to put the services in place.
- The social worker carries out a review after 6 weeks to see that support plan is working for the individual.

The process is reflected in the following diagram.



Some of the key functions involved in Support Brokerage include

- Enabling the individual to consider how they wish to live their life and what support is required to achieve this
- Ensuring the individual is able to speak out, and where needed be

represented

- Helping people identify innovative ways they could access or put in place appropriate and creative support options
- Exploring possible options especially available community resources
- Providing information (signposting)
- Providing technical advice, including the use of Direct Payments and the employment of Personal Assistants.
- Encouraging informal support
- Co-ordinating support and resources
- Ensuring the individual has the support to manage their budget
- Facilitation to enable things to happen

Support Brokerage since October 2010

The brokerage service is a key service for the Council and is a fundamental pillar to our Business Strategy. .

The first year of the contract has presented a number of challenges for all involved. There has been a significant amount of change experienced between the end of the Learning Exercise and the commencement of the Brokerage Service that operates today.

The existing service was introduced against a background of

- A new operational structure in Social & Community Services with new roles and new members of staff
- A changing financial and economic environment
- The introduction of a Resource Allocation System as part of self-directed support
- New processes for recording and paperwork
- A need to work with clients who were already receiving care
- The transformation of the market place with the emergence of alternatives to traditional care, the closure of the Council's Internal Home Support Service, the development of a User Led Organisation and a growth in the number of Personal Assistants available.

A number of factors have been identified as the service has developed

1. Expected Bandings – The contracted service was set up with notional times needed to deliver brokerage set against 3 bandings.

Band A – 10 hours brokerage

Band B – 15 hours brokerage

Band C – 25 hours brokerage

Our initial expectations were that 80% of cases would be at Band A with an allowance of 10 hours per case. Monitoring information to the end of September 2011 is suggesting that 91% of cases are Band A, 7% are Band B and 2% are band C.

2. Hours Taken Per Case – Information extracted from monitoring returns during the last 12 months had suggested varying levels of success in keeping to the above banding levels for brokerage for older people.

More recently we have worked collaboratively with both providers to look at work processes including throughput and time management of the casework. Providers have implemented tools to help brokers to structure tasks to be carried out and the time needed to do so. This includes

- clarifying expectations with clients,
- clarifying work to be done with the Council,
- ensuring referrals are appropriate and appropriately banded,
- responding to requests to increase banding and
- improving internal guidance for brokers.

Brokers are now delivering support plans within or close to the agreed banding levels. For Band A cases, information for September is indicating that brokerage is now being delivered at between 11 - 13 hours per case.

3. Service Capacity & Activity Levels - Providers were given an expectation of the minimum volumes of demand. Throughout the year these staffing levels have come under pressure because of the volumes of cases referred to them as Social & Community Services accelerated its transition process and because of the time taken to address individual packages.

Information taken from monitoring data identifies the following activity levels

Activity (1 Oct 2010- 30 Sep 2011)	AgeUk	Advance
Cases Referred	514	321
Cases Closed	397	156
Ongoing Cases	117	165
Casework Time (%age)	88%	91%
Average days per case (Initial date of referral from Brokerage Co-ordinator to approx. date of closure from Broker)	66	66
Staffing levels - Brokers Used	29	13
Current staffing levels - Brokers (September 2011)	15	6

4. Creativity in Support Planning – As stated above, the majority of cases passed to organisations have been transition clients i.e. people already receiving care who are being offered a Personal Budget. In many cases they are not wishing to change their provider and this has raised issues around how you can be 'creative' when clients are happy with what they have.

However in terms of new service users, brokerage providers have been able to support them to consider new options as their individual situations have allowed.

The ability to be creative has also been affected by a provider market that is still developing in terms of its ability to deliver creative packages.

- Some providers are looking to develop new expanded services in response to a wider variety of service demand.
- Others continue to look towards the delivery of traditional services
- There is considerable competition for staff resources as new social care providers enter the market and new health & social care services are developed.
- The number of Personal Assistants is starting to increase and this will offer new opportunities in the future.

In order to test the quality of the support planning being undertaken senior operational managers looked at a sample of those produced. This review has found that care plans generally include the level of detail that would be expected from them.

5. Introduction of New Service Areas in the last 12 months

The decision by this council to use brokerage as a credible independent means of support planning, has now been replicated by other agencies locally. Oxfordshire PCT is carrying out a trial to provide Personal Health Budgets to people in the north of Oxfordshire. Oxford Health has also contracted independent brokerage to assist people with mental health problems in the creation of their support plans.

And on a national level, more and more local authorities are exploring how independent brokerage can benefit our customers in their support planning.

6. Business Processes

The development of the service, systems and processes has continued throughout the year. Providers and the council have had to respond as new issues are identified and new ways of dealing with them have been agreed. As such the service has been in a developmental phase for the past 12 months.

One such example would be transmission of personal information and consideration of issues around data security. The associated risks of this have been mitigated by allowing appropriate but restricted access to the Directorate's Document Manager System to ensure the safe transfer of data between the council and external brokers

7. Working Relationships with Brokerage Providers

Both contracted organisations see this service as a priority for the future.

At times there have been tensions between social care teams and brokers, but lots of good work is happening too. We are able to address local issues and reach compromises and solutions as these occur.

There is a strong positive relationship between the providers and Social & Community Services at both a strategic and operational level. This has meant that the complexities that have arisen over the first year have been considered and adjustments and improvements made.

In the coming months we intend to bring both providers closer to the Directorate to support stronger joint-working in this key service area.

8. The Role of Adult Social Care Teams

Running parallel to the introduction of independent brokerage is the transformation of our Adult Social Care Teams. One year ago support planning was the exclusive domain of our social work staff. The change in culture and practice required to place support planning in the hands of our customers is taking place, but it does not yet match where we would like it to be.

Our intention is to increasingly focus our social work resource on the review of a person's needs and progress with support planning, rather than the actual support planning itself. This aspect needs to become the domain of the independent brokers, except where the person themselves or family member is undertaking this role.

The 'letting go' of council-led support planning is reliant on increasing the confidence amongst our social care workforce in independent brokerage. Part of the solution to this is revisiting expectations as to the purpose of brokerage and what constitutes an effective support plan. These are issues that our operational managers are working through with our staff and with the independent brokerage agencies.

9. Feedback from Service Users

We have recently looked at a random sample of 12 service users who have used each brokerage service. Their views are shown overleaf.

Age UK

Question	Yes	No	Partly	Not answered or don't know
Found information and advice useful?	11	1		
Broker showed listening and understanding skills	11	1		
Client felt fully involved in choosing & arranging services	8	1	3	
Felt Support Plan answered needs	7	3		1
Situation improved since support plan in place?	3	5	1	3

Advance

Question	Yes	No	Partly	Not answered or don't know
Broker friendly and helpful?	12			
Client kept informed of process	10	1	1	
Broker worked well with Carers etc	11			1
Client issues addressed?	10	2		
Satisfied with Support plan?	10	1		1
Happy with Broker service?	10	2		

In year 2 of the contract we are looking to increase the response rate from service users so that we can continue to shape and adjust the service we provide for the benefit of service users.

Findings from the Internal Review of Self Directed Support

We want to update members on an internal review of Self Directed Support which was carried out in June this year. This review:

- Recognised the need to involve brokers earlier in the care pathway
- Considered whether we should provide a 'starter budget' to meet basic needs and then allow time for brokers to be more creative with the remaining budget.
- Explored whether we should offer brokerage vouchers to service users.
- Considered ways in which Adult Social Care could focus on reviewing progress and cost of support.

Other key comments are described below.

Comment	Response
Communication is not good between brokers and OCC professionals	Brokerage based in operational teams to improve communication (if only for 1 day a week). An Internal brokerage service that can be used for complex cases.
The majority of the cases sent for brokerage are transition cases from those with current care packages in place and not new cases. Makes creativity more difficult.	Not referring clients who request no change to existing packages through brokerage
Appropriateness of brokerage referrals. Staff sending straight forward cases or too complex cases.	Clearer guidelines of appropriateness of referrals to brokerage.
Poor quality of support plans (anecdotal); not radical or creative and reinventing wheel by calling agencies for costings	Wider balance of cases. Support plans are looked at/audited for creativity and quality.
For Learning Disability - 10 hours is a nonsensical banding for those with learning disabilities	Banding is redesigned for those with learning disabilities to reflect timescales of how long a specific task/ type of support plan should take rather than arbitrary bandings
Part time brokers are difficult to work with due to the limitation of hours for contact etc.	This is being raised with the Brokerage providers.
Entire process taking far too long for even simple cases (3 months) from point of referral.	Additional support being provided by S&CS Business Support Team to improve performance.
Clients don't always understand brokerage	Brokers using first visit (approximately 1 hour) as a means of introduction and to begin thinking process. Negative impact would be additional brokerage time for travel etc
Positive experiences of the help provided by brokers by some service users and carers	These comments have been passed to the Brokerage providers.

The recommendations from the review are being taken forward by the Deputy Director, Adult Social Care. They are being used to review the client pathway in place and improve the outcome for service users.

CONCLUSION

Our vision remains one of ensuring that the person with identified social care needs is the decision-maker in respect of the support that they receive. The ability to access informed and independent brokerage in creating and establishing support plans is central to this vision.

The contracts that we have put in place have shown that this vision is achievable, but that there is still work to be done to ensure that brokerage can grow in terms of both its efficiency and creativity. The answer to these

improvements lies equally with both our own pathways and processes, and with how the brokerage agencies approach and organise their work.

The first of year of engagement with the two brokerage agencies has provided us with the insights to recognise many of the constraints on fully achieving our vision. We will continue to review and improve our customer pathways with these constraints in mind, together with developing our marketplace and the provision of personal assistants.

We are confident that our continued collaborative relationships with both providers will enable the required improvements and development to make independent brokerage an attractive and rewarding experience for all our customers.

John Jackson
Director for Social & Community Services
14 October 2011