

PERSONALISATION CASE STUDIES

5. Medway Council's approach to Supporting People within Individual Budgets: cash allocations to individuals for housing-related support

BACKGROUND

In coming up with proposals for integrating Supporting People into Individual Budgets Medway has sought to take note of the following key facts:

- The provision of housing-related support is not a statutory duty for authorities. No one has a legal right to receive a housing-related support service
- The Supporting People programme is focussed on a facilitating a far more specific objective than social care generally i.e. ensuring that people are able to live in independent accommodation.

So Medway designed a Grants programme to make it clear what the specific contribution and value of housing-related support actually is.

THE NEW SERVICE MODEL

In the Medway model, housing-related support is defined as a range of specific types of assistance:

- Assistance to acquire the skills and confidence necessary, to manage accommodation with the maximum degree of independence
- Assistance to explore the housing options
- Practical assistance to maintain a home, when this is otherwise difficult because of disability or some other vulnerability
- Assistance to settle in to new accommodation
- On call assistance when required.

The Grant regime in Medway is then built around funding these different aspects of assistance. In this context, it is important to recognise the breadth of possible interventions that can come within the term housing-related support, alongside the relative narrowness of the outcomes that it is specifically designed to facilitate.

Historically Supporting People funding was precluded by Grant Conditions from helping a local authority to fulfil a statutory duty, and could not be used to simply top-up social care. Medway continues to believe that this is the right approach. Housing-related support should be regarded as a preventative service.

Medway wishes to retain the distinctness of the housing-related support contribution to people's overall wellbeing. It is important, therefore, to link the contribution from the Supporting People budget to specific relevant objectives that the individual wishes to achieve with the money received in their Individual Budget. To achieve this, Medway's system dovetails with their existing Resource Allocation System. However, the Resource Allocation System calculation keeps housing-related support separate for all clients and can be used for "Supporting People only" cases.

There are broadly six ways in which people receiving a personal housing support grant (effectively, a Supporting People Individual Budget) can use services to meet their identified support objectives.

1. Use of informal support arrangements from friends, family or neighbours
2. Use of services that are universal or block-funded or free at the point of delivery
3. Use of community facilities with a chargeable element
4. Use of generalist support services (e.g. existing contracted Supporting People services). The client is only be able to select these from a list of accredited providers.
5. Use of a range of specialist chargeable services
6. Direct employment of a support worker. This is only an option if the client is also receiving money from adult social care.

The model assumes three different types of intervention:

- Short-term intensive intervention – providing tuition, working alongside service user to learn tasks, supervision, advocacy, practical assistance, and brokerage
- Short-term basic intervention – providing information, advice occasional prompting, and signposting to other services
- Long-term maintenance – monitoring and occasional assistance in relation to the other two categories.

Service users' cash allocations are then calculated according to high, medium or low levels of need for each intervention type. It is assumed that short-term intensive intervention involves the need for the highest number of support hours and that long-term maintenance involves the lowest number of support hours.

CONCLUSIONS

The Medway approach reflects the primary emphasis of Supporting People, where higher level packages tend to relate to the *development* of independence skills rather than *maintenance*. This focus on (potentially) time limited, preventative interventions is quite different to traditional care approaches, based on meeting long term needs. In this sense, it is an attempt to integrate Supporting People with wider health and social care provision, without losing sight of the distinctive nature of Supporting People services.

For more information contact Mark Goldup at HGO Consulting who was engaged by the council to develop a way of integrating housing-related support into its Individual Budgets processes – mark@hgo-consultancy.ltd.uk