



# **Personalisation and housing support: where we are now**

**A Sitra report by Kate McAllister**

**October 2010**

# Acknowledgements

I would like to all those who have contributed to this study. In particular, the following:

- Durham Council
- Liverpool Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Thurrock Council
- Nottinghamshire Council
- Hampshire Council
- Family Mosaic Housing Association
- Mark Goldup of HGO Consultancy re Medway
- Medway Council
- Stonham
- Carr-Gomm
- Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trust

***Kate McAllister, October 2010***

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Brief</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Context</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>What we did</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>5</b>
The impact of the personalisation agenda on directly commissioned housing support services.....	5
Available resources .....	7
The impact of required efficiencies on commissioning priorities.....	8
Examples of joint working.....	8
Common specifications.....	8
Joint contracts .....	9
On-going joint commissioning.....	9
Development of joint commissioning frameworks with Adult Social Care.....	9
Case study – Hampshire Supporting People and Personalisation – The Individual Budget Direct Payment Pilots.....	9
Challenges of joint working.....	10
Other approaches to the commissioning of personalised housing support .....	12
Future Commissioning plans .....	14
Core and flexi.....	14
Brokerage advice and support.....	15
Innovative work.....	15
Family Mosaic ‘Let Me choose’ pilot.....	15
Cheshire Peaks & Plains Housing Trust.....	17
Medway Council.....	17
Stonham - Durham Mental Health Service (Durham County Council Awards for Personalisation award winner 2010).....	18
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Learning Points</b> .....	<b>19</b>

## Brief

During the late summer and autumn of 2010, Sitra carried out some brief research to review the impact of the personalisation agenda on current commissioning practice for housing support services across a sample of local authorities. This research took place before the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review were announced in October 2010.

The aim was to establish the range of current practice, and the impact that personalisation has had to date on housing support services.

The following issues were explored:

### *From a commissioning perspective*

- The impact of the personalisation agenda on directly commissioned housing support services, including:
  - Available resources
  - Examples of joint commissioning of personalised services
  - Impact of new QAF
- Details of where housing support funding has been included in an individual's personal budget and details of the types of services being purchased.
- Latest position on the joint commissioning of personalised services.
- Details of any planned changes to current commissioning practice.
- Other ways of ensuring that providers deliver a personalised service.
- Infrastructure and resource issues for commissioners (including the Adult Social Care RAS).
- The impact of required efficiencies on commissioning priorities.
- Action to manage local markets and prepare providers for the impact of personalisation.

### *From a provider perspective*

- The extent to which the local provider market has been able to respond to the personalisation agenda.
- The potential impact on the provider market and choice for service users.
- Details of positive practice.

## Context

From a housing support perspective, being “person-centred” means ensuring that the support offered to an individual is based on their individual needs and aspirations. This can apply in all housing and social care settings and goes much

further than simply giving Personal Budgets to people eligible for local authority Fair Access to Care funding.

Since the Supporting People programme was introduced in 2003, there has been a steady focus on the delivery of outcome-focused person centred housing support. This is reflected in the latest version of the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) introduced in February 2009, which requires a level A or excellent service to be 'flexible and responsive, and able to adapt the service to best meet clients' needs'.

We wanted to find out what, in reality, has changed in the commissioning and provision of housing support services, particularly since the introduction of Putting People First and the Transformation Agenda.

We also wanted to establish the impact of steadily reducing budgets and predict the impact of impending major reductions to public sector budgets following the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. In theory, even in an environment of reducing budgets and rising demand, most social care professionals still want to deliver customer-focused and personalised services. In practice however this is becoming increasingly challenging.

## **What we did**

We spoke to a sample of 7 local authority housing support commissioners and a small number of housing support providers. The aim was to achieve a reasonable geographical spread, and to include a mix of unitary and two tier authorities. *Right to Control* Trailblazer sites were excluded.

Findings from a September 2010 Sitra questionnaire with responses from 49 Supporting People Commissioners were also taken into account.

## **Findings**

### **The impact of the personalisation agenda on directly commissioned housing support services**

The commitment to delivering increasingly personalised services, which are outcome focused and meet individual needs in a flexible way, remains a priority for commissioners and most intend to change the way they commission services in the future to reflect this. We found several examples of plans for productive joint working with Adult Social Care colleagues, in terms of joint frameworks and contracts and shared specifications, with an emphasis on personalisation. There was however little

or no evidence from our sample, of Supporting People funding being included in an Individual's Personal Budget.

However, most of the authorities we spoke to and 60% of the Sitra survey respondents indicated that progress to date has been slower than they would have wished, and that up to now there has been little or no change to current service contracts or specifications to facilitate further personalisation and choice for clients in receipt of housing support. All the quotes in the text boxes that follow are from commissioners of housing support.

'We undertook a pilot. The service users wished to remain with their current provider'

'Everything that's happening in Adult Social Care should have knock-on effect.'

'We have not been asked to look at this yet. We have attended various training courses and have kept abreast of options and ideas but the lead on this change process has not yet looked at bringing in SP.'

'Possible move to Individual Budgets for high cost residential Supporting people services (for clients with an existing eligible social care need)'

'We are currently looking at elements of this to enable personalisation of Supporting People.'

'We are proposing to change them in the future as this has not yet been implemented.'

'Currently, there is no real scope for service users to exercise full choice over the provider of their support, given the block contract nature of most commissioning, and to have access to a more creative range of support services.'

'The impact on Supporting People services has been quite limited. . We identified the need for a dedicated person, based in Supporting People but working with transfer team, to identify how Putting people First should impact. However there was a delay of 18 months and they have just started. They're only in post until the end of March, when the Department of Health implementation funding runs out.'

'All services are very personalised due to small size here'

'Supporting People is not currently included in the Transformation Agenda, and prevention services including the voluntary sector are not yet part of personalisation.'

This general lack of progress in terms of formal, contractual personalisation of housing support services reflects the national position regarding take-up of Personal

Budgets for people in receipt of Adult Social Care, with latest figures showing a take-up of only 13% for 2009/10 (up from 6.7% in 2008-9.)<sup>1</sup>

Local Authorities in England are expected to have 30% of service users in receipt of Adult Social Care on Personal Budgets by next March, under targets agreed by ADASS, the Local Government Association and the Department of Health. Based on current progress, this target is unlikely to be achieved.

The councils we spoke to give a number of possible reasons for slow progress to date with regard to the personalisation of housing support services.

### **Available resources**

Many Supporting People teams have now been disbanded, with resources depleted and dispersed into wider commissioning teams, often as part of Adult Social Care departments. Some teams remain intact, but with a reduced remit, concentrating for example on homeless and other socially excluded groups. In all cases, teams are stretched and the main focus is on re-procurement of services to ensure value for money and efficiencies in the light of required budget cuts.

Although all of the local authorities we spoke to remain committed to the principle of personalisation, and to ensuring wherever possible that services are outcome-focused with the individual at the centre, there is often not enough time available to explore the potential for innovative practice and service improvement.

The Social Care Reform Grant<sup>2</sup> (support from central government to progress the concept of self-directed support for Adult Social Care clients) will cease in March 2011. Unless councils have resources available to continue to fund this work, it will mean less in-house support available for housing support commissioners who have been working jointly with Adult Social Care colleagues to develop and progress the local Transformation Agenda.

'The financial situation of the Supporting People Programme is such that opportunities to explore more fundamental innovation in regard to personal budgets will have to be funded through existing resources.'

---

<sup>1</sup> NHS information centre August 2010

<sup>2</sup> a ring-fenced grant, which provides £520 million over 3 years to support councils to deliver the necessary changes in their systems and processes to undertake this transformation. The expectation is that by 2011 the majority of councils will have in place the core components of a transformed system.

## **The impact of required efficiencies on commissioning priorities.**

There was a general concern from housing support commissioners about the impact of required efficiency savings resulting from the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. Many local authorities already had savings targets in place across all commissioning departments, some in the region of 40%, and this has had a real impact on commissioning practice and priorities:

‘The new Supporting People Strategy (2010 onwards) had a big focus on personalisation – but this is now superseded by the need to save money.’

‘I’m scared by what the future holds. Services are still at risk in cash terms and in the future personalisation must come second as we desperately try to save services.’

‘Not much at all is happening in terms of personalisation at present. Our main focus on outcome of budget cuts due in October.’

‘Supporting People is at risk despite robust cost benefit analysis locally regionally and nationally.’

‘Any element of creativity and use of under spends is out of the window, Worse case scenario services all reduced to basic safety net.’

‘The Personalisation Board is becoming more and more conservative in light of efficiencies etc.’

‘When reviewing disability services, we wanted providers to come back to us with any examples of what could be done with an Individual Budget, but because they’ve had to make savings, for new contracts coming out in April, with reduced hours, reduced hourly rates etc, these are now too tight to enable flexibility and top slicing.’

## **Examples of joint working**

Despite these widespread concerns, our research identified several positive examples of joint working between commissioners of housing support and adult social care commissioners to personalise support services. These include:

### **Common specifications**

‘The specifications we now use are based on common specifications used for supported living, supporting people. These specifications are also mirrored in other social care areas.’

‘We are currently working with colleagues from adult social care and district social care teams to develop a model specification for extra care services which reflects a more personalised approach.’

## Joint contracts

‘The contract will cover personalisation and different funding streams managed through one contract.’

‘When re contracting or procuring for joint services with Adult Social Care, we will look to enable personalisation and individual budgets and then expand this to Supporting People only services’

‘A small number of new contracts, where jointly contracted with Adult Social Care, have mechanisms built into them for negotiation in years two and three to take account of changes connected with the transformation agenda and introduction of personalisation.’

## On-going joint commissioning

- For example, funding pooled with adult services to provide Individual Service Funds for Learning Disability (excluding mild) and Physical Disability and arrangements to pool funding with Adult Services to provide personalisation funds within contracts for socially excluded people.

## Development of joint commissioning frameworks with Adult Social Care

- For example, commissioning of services for individuals with long-term needs, with the aim of introducing Personal Budgets that include an element of housing support funding.

‘Our new Learning Disability Framework is about to go out to tender. This will work on a call off basis using the Resource Allocation System (RAS) and Self Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) to identify needs and allocate funds to individuals to spend.’

‘Joint commissioning of a framework arrangement with Adult Social Care to facilitate personalisation of Learning Disability contracts – with a framework in place by April for both)’

‘Joint packages with Supporting People, Adult Social Care and direct payments.’

## Case study – Hampshire Supporting People and Personalisation – The Individual Budget Direct Payment Pilots

A slightly increased number of individuals in Hampshire have continued to be provided with the opportunity to access Supporting People resources via direct payment, essentially through joint work with Adult Services commissioning teams and care management personnel. This is enabling clients to experience a range of support service models, for example:

- One client with physical disabilities directly employing staff to support them to live independently within their own self-contained accommodation, having previously lived in residential care.

- One client with physical disabilities directly purchasing their support from an agency, whilst living in self-contained accommodation with a live-in carer, having previously lived in residential care.

- One client with learning disabilities directly purchasing their support from an agency within a shared living environment, having moved there from the parental home.

All the above clients are users of long-term disabilities services, Fair Access to Care (FACS) eligible clients, and have benefitted from access to care management involvement and subsequent review. They have expressed a sense of control and satisfaction in regard to their service provision, which has provided scope for flexibility and an outcome focus, rather than being activity driven.

## **Potential challenges to inclusion of Supporting People funding in Adult Social Care funded Personal Budgets**

The commissioners involved in this research identified some potential challenges to the inclusion of Supporting People funding in Adult Social Care funded Personal Budgets. These include the following:

1. Housing support can only be included in Adult Social Care Personal Budgets for those individuals who meet the local authority FACS (Fair Access to Care) eligibility criteria. Many authorities have already increased these thresholds to severe or critical, and this definition excludes the majority of people in receipt of housing support.
2. It is seen as easier to establish joint arrangements for the commissioning of Adult Social Care and Housing Support if there is already a contract in place with a care provider, because Housing Support input and funding can be incorporated and overall oversight of the contract given to Adult Social Care. It can be more challenging to incorporate care input into a Housing Support contract. In one example, we were told that the care commissioner was unwilling to subject themselves to the 'rigmarole of signing up to SP bureaucracy including PI workbooks, QAF etc.' In this case, attempts to get

the two local authority departments to agree on appropriate joint monitoring and work together collaboratively without a joint contract failed.

‘The large number of service users within the Supporting People programme (and the high proportion of them that are not FACS eligible); the relatively inclusive nature of SP eligibility criteria, plus the lack of any specific case monitoring infrastructure capacity within the Supporting People Team, all mitigate against wholesale application of personalised budgets.’

3. There are ongoing challenges in terms of adapting Adult Social Care Resource Assessment Systems to reflect housing support input, which is generally subject to different market rates to domiciliary care. Some commissioners also want to ensure that housing support funding was used to deliver SP outcomes, ‘Our funding is more about helping someone to get a job than about social activities like going to the cinema.’ Where the money is actually going is much harder to track once it’s subsumed into an individual’s Personal Budget. If there has been no agreement between commissioners on shared outcomes, each may want to track “their” money and “their” outcome and true joined up service delivery becomes challenging.

### **Challenges of delivering Personal Budgets that do not include Adult Social Care funding**

1. The bureaucracy underpinning Adult Social Care Personal Budgets (Self Assessment Questionnaire, Needs Assessment and Resource Allocation) is administered by Adult Social Care departments. Therefore if an individual does not meet the FACS criteria there is no ready-made infrastructure in place for delivering Personal Budgets.
2. There are however positive examples of local authorities delivering models akin to an Adult Social Care Personal Budget in other ways, such as using an existing commissioning gateway to provide the administrative structure for time-limited Personal Housing Support Grants. (See the example from Medway Council later in the report.)
3. The Right to Control pilots are also exploring the possibilities of offering Personal Budgets to individuals who are not in receipt of Adult Social Care funding, and a Supporting People RAS (Resource Allocation System) is being developed to enable this. Nevertheless, the challenge of how to finance necessary infra-structure costs remains, if adult social care monies are not included in an individual’s Personal Budget.

## Other approaches to the commissioning of personalised housing support

Housing support commissioners want to be able to offer personalised services to a wider audience than simply those with the highest needs, in receipt of Adult Social Care, particularly as many authorities are tightening FACS eligibility criteria and thereby further limiting access to these funds.

We found examples of a number of changes to traditional commissioning practice, to ensure that local housing support services are offering a more personalised approach to as wide a group as possible.

‘For us it’s more about those people who are not FACS eligible.’

Some authorities felt that their existing commissioned services are already offering high quality services that focused on individual needs, with users at the centre of drawing up their support plans with their service provider.

Choice is also offered via a variety of different service provision, with ideally more than one local service for each client group.

### Example

‘We are committed to ensuring that individual choice and control is at the centre of the services which people receive.’

Support Providers should, within existing resources, acquire and deliver any goods and/or services which contribute to service users’ achievement of any of the five Supporting People outcomes.

Where a service provider is unable to meet the needs identified through the service user’s support plan, the provider should network with other providers to see if the service required can be delivered by another organisation

To ensure there is choice for service users, we try to maintain more than one floating support service operating in each district. Occasionally a service user wishes to change their support to another provider and it may be the case that the chosen provider does not have a contract with Supporting People. Provided that the chosen provider is on the Supporting People accredited list, it is hoped that in these situations providers could work together and be flexible enough to accommodate these occasional movements of service users between providers. Sub-contracting arrangements could be set up to facilitate this.’

Other authorities have introduced changes to service specifications for housing support services. Examples include introducing a requirement for providers to offer flexible service delivery hours – with services operating beyond 9am-5pm and at weekends, to better meet individual needs – and introducing a contractual requirement for providers to demonstrate further personalisation of their housing support services.

One authority asked all providers responding to tender opportunities to set out what they are currently doing to improve the personalisation of housing support services. Although they received excellent responses from some providers, they are concerned about an on-going lack of understanding about what personalisation of housing support services actually means. For example one provider provided examples of setting up social clubs as evidence of housing support personalisation.

**Feedback from the Sitra Questionnaire included the following:**

- ‘All specifications and services tendered include aspects of personalisation’
- ‘Reviewing all specifications and service models.’
- ‘In all recently tendered services we have moved towards outcomes based service specifications. In live mental health tender we have introduced the concept of a recovery plan for each service user, which takes forward the concept of a personalised support plan. One service for people with long term needs is asking the provider to align current provision with self-directed support. In all strategic reviews we undertake we evaluate how new arrangements could be made more personalised based on service users' needs, goals and best practice.’
- ‘New service specs are more clearly outcomes focused and the service is expected to be personalised. No decision on funding services in a different way to make them more personalised.’
- ‘Sheltered housing remodelled to give choice of level of support to service users. New spec for extra care using personal budgets’
- ‘Contracts and service specifications will reflect the personalisation agenda.’
- ‘Building in as far as possible. E.g. recent spec for homeless prevention services.’
- ‘Some contracts, particularly those for supported living services for people with learning disabilities, will not be let as block contracts in the future.’

## Future Commissioning plans

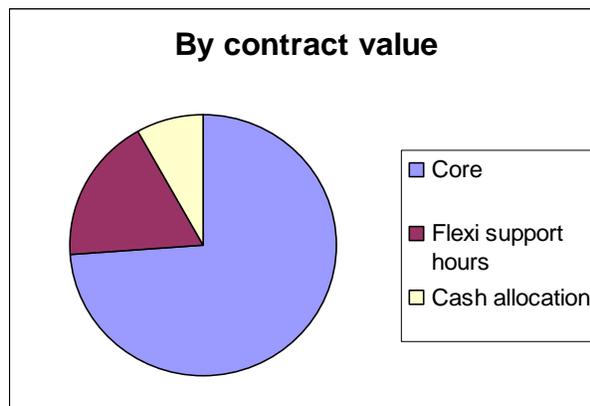
We were provided with a number of examples of how housing support commissioners intend to ensure that services are in line with the broader Putting People First agenda, whilst maintaining a focus on prevention and early intervention.

### Core and flexi

Several commissioners expressed interest in the type of 'core and flexi' model pioneered by Look Ahead Housing and Care in Tower Hamlets.



### Core and flexi model example



The name 'core and flexi' refers to the way that resources are reallocated to maximise customer control. The core comprises those elements of the service required to provide the level of safety and security needed, to implement any statutory duties and provide the capacity to respond to crises, deal with unplanned events and provide routine support. In the Look Ahead service the proportion of total contract value assigned to core is just under three-quarters. Staff shifts for core delivery are planned into the rota as usual to ensure cover, and all staff members are expected to deliver core support in a way that recognises the self-determination of customers.

The flexi element, constituting in this case just over one-quarter of total contract value, is split into one to one individual support time and a cash allocation for each customer which they use to purchase their own support. What constitutes support is

interpreted broadly, as long as it is legal, affordable and practical, and it meets the customer's assessed and eligible needs.<sup>3</sup>

## **Brokerage advice and support**

One of the authorities we spoke to mentioned tentative plans to encourage the SP provider sector to provide brokerage and support in terms of the personalisation of services. Concern about potential conflicts of interest had to be worked through however and nothing concrete is in place as yet.

## **Innovative work**

In the course of our conversations with SP commissioners, we were provided with a number of examples of imaginative approaches to personalising housing support services, for a wide range of client groups. These are summarised in the case studies below:

### **Family Mosaic ‘Let Me choose’ pilot**

Family Mosaic is currently running pilots in 7 existing services across London and Essex, under the banner of ‘Let Me Choose.’

The pilots are testing out new ideas for services to:

- young people
- older people
- people with learning disabilities
- people with mental health issues
- people needing support with drug and alcohol misuse
- people with physical disabilities
- people who use floating support services.

Ideas being tested by the pilots include:

- **A “Sky” type package of support options** – essential, or “core” support (largely to help people maintain their tenancy), plus a number of flexible options, for example daily living skills or personal development, such as helping someone access education.
- Using Family Mosaic **bank notes** as a monthly allowance, people choosing the support activity they spend their allowance on.
- **An activity-based pilot**, where customers choose 10 different activities over the 6 months of the pilot – to help them build confidence and try out new experiences

---

<sup>3</sup>InControl website. Full details in Look Ahead Housing and Care. Choice, control and independence Personalising block contracts in supported housing

- **Using customer suggestions** for alternative ways of carrying out their assessments and support planning – for example, photo books, video diaries and new forms designed by our customers
- Enabling customers to choose **who provides their support** (for example, from a number of support workers), and when they provide it (for example, this could include evening and weekends).
- Offering a **more “hands-on” service**, so that we can help with things like shopping, cooking or accompanying people to appointments.

Although a formal evaluation of the pilot process has not yet taken place, initial learning points include the following:

People don't tend to wish for the unachievable. What they want is often very simple. For example, as part of the pilot work with older people, clients were asked what would make a real difference. The responses were very straightforward. Could a staff member help throw a ball around in the garden? One lady just wanted to be supported to sit in the park and watch the world go by.

Giving people real choice can have unexpected consequences. For example, young people challenged staff about the need for them to have a formal support plan, asking whether the staff members had a support plan. Instead clients have opted for wallet sized support cards which set out, in small bite sized pieces 'what I've got to sort out this week.' Support is also offered via social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter

Family Mosaic also involved clients in discussions about staff rotas and cover arrangements and found this helped them to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of services.

They emphasised that many of these changes to current support practice have cost very little but have had a significant impact on an individual's quality of life.

What has been particularly helpful has been the flexibility of housing support commissioning authorities involved in the pilots. This has enabled staff to focus on achieving individuals desired outcomes in a way that might not otherwise have been possible.

Family Mosaic has also been piloting a more personalised approach to general needs housing, with a personalised housing plan for new tenants. Housing officers meet new tenants every 6 weeks for an initial period post move-in, to ensure that the individual has access to correct benefits, signpost to local services etc. This approach has helped to identify more vulnerable tenants and has enabled early

intervention and, where necessary referral to the local floating support service to help prevent debt problems and rent arrears.

## **Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trust**

This provider's service for older people has been redesigned to offer more flexibility and choice and to ensure that scarce resources can be targeted more effectively. Customers (both the Trusts own tenants and private sector clients) can choose from a range of options:

- **1\* Monitoring** – no visits. If there was an emergency the nominated key holder would be notified.
- **2\*** As above. No visits but emergency response as required.
- **3\*** As above plus monthly visit to check circumstances etc.
- **4\*** As above plus weekly visit.
- **5\*** as above plus daily visit.

The level of service is based on choice for self-funded customers and a needs assessment for customers who are eligible for housing support funding. However, all customers have the option to upgrade to a higher level of service if they are willing to pay the difference.

The Trust also offers a temporary '*Home Alone*' service for up to a month, to help people settle back at home after a hospital visit, or when their main carer is away. This package can include temporary equipment rental (including lifeline pendant and basic telecare equipment)

Since this tiered approach was introduced, the Trust has found that a majority of tenants have opted for the lowest tiers, thereby freeing up staff time for targeted more intensive work, as and when required. People also feel it is a fair system – and can see that those who are fit and well are not paying for the same level of service as their frailer neighbours.

All clients receive a routine review every six months and service packages can be changed at any time if circumstances change.

## **Medway Council**

Medway Council is in the early stages of a large pilot, whereby individuals in need of housing support will be offered a time-limited Personal Housing Support Grant (PHSG). A mix of clients is taking part in the pilot, with both long and short term needs.

Personal Housing Support Grant can be used to purchase a variety of different services, depending on individual need. For example there is an option to purchase a resettlement grant, entitlement to which is limited to up to 6 months.

- The PHSG is paid 4-weekly. Individuals can choose whether they
  - receive a direct payment – cash paid into designated bank account
  - nominate a ‘principle provider’ – to receive the money for them and help them spend it
  - have a local credit card (the Medway Card) – allowing people to make payments directly without having the hassle of using cash

Access to a Personal Housing Support Grant is via a single Gateway. Grants are not means tested for the period of the pilot.

### **Stonham - Durham Mental Health Service (Durham County Council Awards for Personalisation award winner 2010)**

Various tools facilitate the personalisation processes. These include:

- **Listening to clients**, pooling upon their experience to drive change;
- **Staff training** ‘The Journey’ is part of the induction process. Personalisation remained a standard agenda item during team meetings, workshops are delivered.
- **Supporting Clients Effectively** provides staff with structured guidance on support planning. Clients determine their own aspirations, using their own thoughts, words, to develop bite size goals that are realistic and timely.
- **Working Lunch** and **Client Forums** provide opportunities to consult with clients and provide updates
- **Staff Mapping Matrix**, available to match skills with need. For example whilst some clients request their Link worker support irrespective of their workers skills levels, others prefer to complete tasks with staff or others suitably qualified in that field. For instance four clients go mountain bike riding with a member of staff that has mountain bike skills

Clients complete their *My Way Forward* support plan mapping out personal journeys, the route they wish to take, which passengers to collect along the way to help them find innovative solutions. For example: Staff supported RMcG to learn to read in the evenings, and attended food hygiene exam so RMcG could certificate. RMcG then volunteered locally gaining experience and became our communal meals chef RMcG has now applied to Low Newton Prison to become a cook to fulfil her aspirations.

## Conclusions

Based on the evidence from this small piece of research, it would appear that, despite reducing budgets and shrinking resources, local authority commissioners remain committed to the concept of improving the personalisation of housing support services.

Although we did not find many current examples of innovative commissioning practice, most authorities are keen to offer clients better choice and control over their housing support services in the future.

What is particularly heartening are the examples of innovative practice at provider level, which clearly show what is possible, if clients are placed at the centre of their services and given real choices about what works well for them and what does not.

## Learning points

Some key messages have emerged from this piece of work:

- Housing support services can be personalised in a variety of ways – and Personal Budgets are only one example. Commissioned services can also deliver an extremely effective outcome focused service that places the individual at the centre.
- It is possible to establish systems akin to Personal Budgets for recipients of housing support funding, through cards and vouchers as well as cash, although this process will be seen as much more straightforward for commissioners to administer if an existing infra structure such as single referral gateway is already in place.
- The removal of the SP ring-fence has encouraged the commissioning of flexible housing support and other services that blend seamlessly together to provide a personalised package for the individual.
- Sometimes the simplest of changes are the most effective and often come from listening to what service users say they really value . (For example allowing time for staff to throw a ball around with someone or take them to the park)
- Personalisation of services can lead to efficiencies. Involving service users in discussion about levels of service and availability of staff can challenge assumptions about what is needed and lead to agreement to reduce or more efficiently deploy staff.

© 2010, SITRA (Services)

Sitra  
3rd Floor  
55 Bondway  
London SW8 1SJ

Tel: 020 7793 4710  
Email: [post@sitra.org](mailto:post@sitra.org)

Web: [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org)

SitraCEO's blog: <http://sitraceo.wordpress.com>

Follow us on Twitter

  
<http://twitter.com/sitrapolicy>

Charity Reg No 290599. Company Reg No 1862908.

**Sitra is partly funded by the CLG**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE