

The Individual Budgets Pilot Programme - An Overview

The Individual Budget Pilot Programme is an important part of the government's agenda to give people who use public services more choice and control in deciding what support or services they get. It is a cross-government initiative being led by the Department of Health, working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, Communities and Local Government and the Office for Disability Issues.

Individual Budgets gives someone a clear, up-front idea about how much money there is available for their support. They make assessment quicker and easier so that people don't have to give out information time and again. It brings together different kinds of support or funding from more than one agency and lets people use the money in a way that best suits their own needs and situation. They are given the support to plan what they want and to organise it, from a broker, advocate, family or friends.

Individual budgets put people in the centre of the planning process, and recognises that they are the person best placed to understand their own needs and how to meet them. It is flexible enough to allow people who are satisfied with existing services to keep these, and also give people a range of options for building up more individually tailored support, using Direct Payments and other routes.

Which income streams are included in the pilot?

Each income stream works in a different way, with different legal rules and policy guidance. Bringing them together takes a lot of work. Because of this, Ministers decided to run with just the following six for now:

Income stream	What it covers
Council provided social care for adults	Money that social services spend on day centres, residential care, supported living, meals on wheels and other kinds of 'social care'.
Supporting People funding	Money spent on 'housing related support' to help people live independently in their own home, including developing life skills, such as understanding tenancy agreements, budgeting and cooking. See www.spkweb.org.uk/
Independent Living Fund	This is money to help disabled people live in the community. See www.ilf.org.uk/
Disabled Facilities Grant	This can pay for changes to your house, like a stair lift or a ramp. See www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/disabledfacilitiesgrant
Integrated Community Equipment Services	This pays for equipment you might need, like a raised toilet seat, or a grab rail. See www.icesdoh.org/about.asp
Access to Work	This can pay up to 100% of the cost of workplace adjustments to help a disabled person take up or retain paid work. See www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/AccessToWork/index.html

The pilot sites

Thirteen Local Authorities were selected to take part in the pilot and each of the sites is trying out Individual Budgets in different ways, with different people and using different funding streams.

Local Authority	Who will be involved in Individual Budgets
Gateshead	People with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory impairments and/or people who use mental health services at times of transition from children's services to adult services, and from adult services to older peoples services. www.gateshead.gov.uk/Care%20and%20Health/Community%20Care/individualbudgets.aspx
Coventry	People with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory impairments and/or people who use mental health services. www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/social-care-and-health/social-services/individual-budgets-pilot/
West Sussex	Older people www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/social-care-and-health/adults/individual-budgets.en
Manchester	Older people - people with neurological illness, renal patients www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?categoryID=287&documentID=2892&pageNumber=3
Oldham	All adults including older adults www.oldham.gov.uk/az_of_services/cs-social-services-offices.htm
Barnsley	All adults including older adults and young people in transition. www.barnsley.gov.uk/bguk/Health_Wellbeing_Care/Individual%20Budgets%20and%20Self%20Directed%20Support
Lincolnshire	Starting with older people, but later to include all adults. www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/section.asp?docId=46723&catId=10240&pageTitle=more+choice+over+care
Barking and Dagenham	Older people, people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and/or people who use mental health services. www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/6-social-services/comm-disability/individual-budgets/individual-budgets-main.html
Kensington & Chelsea	Older people and people with physical disabilities www.rbkc.gov.uk/SocialServices/general/individual-budgets-default.asp
Leicester	People with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and people with sensory impairments. May include other people later in the pilot. www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council--services/social-care-health/older-people/individual-budgets
Bath & North East Somerset	People with a learning difficulty, older people and younger people with a physical or sensory impairment. www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/healthandsocial/helpforadults/managingyourowncare/indvbudgets/default.htm
Essex	People with learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities, family carers www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/dis/guc.jsp?channelOid=15176&guideOid=24036&guideContentOid=79858
Norfolk	People with mental health problems www.norfolk.gov.uk/consumption/idcplg?IdcService=SS_GET_PAGE&nodeId=28

Support for the Pilot Sites

A team from the Care Services Improvement Partnership give the sites support. Changing from how things are set up now, to a system where Local Authorities can give people individual budgets means some massive system changes - so the team is there to help them with this. They do this by giving the sites help and advice and bringing in other people who can help, including from the In Control programme. They also bring the sites together to share ideas and solve problems and take issues raised to the government departments who have responsibility for them.

Support from In Control

Many of the changes the sites are trying to make are also being tested as part of the In Control programme. We link in closely to the on-going learning from In Control and often ask people from In Control to work with the sites to help figure out solutions to problems. Find out more about the work of In Control from the In Control website.

Stakeholders

Individual Budgets cover a wide range of people with different needs. It is of interest to many organisations, including those that provide care services and others that represent people who use services and social care staff.

It is important we listen to their views. We have asked all 13 of our pilot sites to make sure they involve their local stakeholders in their projects, including voluntary organisations, providers of services, and local people. We will be working with the pilot sites to make sure that they can do this, and supporting them where necessary.

It is also important that stakeholders are involved in central policy development. We have formed an Individual Budgets Reference Group that meets regularly to discuss progress in the pilots. This group will also help us to get messages about Individual Budgets out to other stakeholders. We also

have two sub groups that are made up of organisations with a user-focus and a provider-focus.

The evaluation

Three research units are working together to evaluate the pilot programme: the Personal Social Services Research Unit, the Social Care Workforce Research Unit and the Social Policy Research Unit.

It is important that the pilot programme is independently evaluated to check how individual budgets work for the people who get them, and everyone else involved. What we learn from the evaluation will also be important if Individual Budgets are rolled out further, so we can make sure that the best possible systems are introduced across the country.

What will the evaluation be looking for?

The evaluation project will see whether individual budgets offer a better way of supporting disabled adults and older people than the ways things work at the moment. It will also say what 'models' work best for different people.

The research will look at five main things:

- Experiences and outcomes for people who get them, and their families - did people find it a better way of doing things and did it give them better support?
- Does it cost more, or less, and does it give better or worse value for money?
- What it means for the 'social care system' as a whole including the organisations who provide services
- What people choose to buy with their individual budgets - and how they decide this, how the services and support gets organised and who manages this
- What it means for the workforce, in terms of financial management, legal and professional issues.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

Are Individual budgets the same as Direct Payments?

Individual Budgets build on what works about Direct Payments and, like Direct Payments, they are about giving people more choice and control. A person could get all or part of their Individual Budget as a Direct Payment. So what are the differences? Individual Budgets would include a number of income streams brought together in order to give the individual a more joined-up package of support. Individual Budgets would also give the individual choice over how they get the money for their support - it does not have to be a cash allocation. Most importantly, individual budgets put people in the centre of the planning process, and recognise that they are the person best placed to understand their own needs and how to meet them.

Can the implementation of Individual Budgets improve the care system without putting in additional investment?

Individual Budgets are intended to be delivered within local authorities' existing financial envelope. Evidence from the In Control pilots suggests that people can get support that works better for them, using no more additional resources, if the person and those around can be more involved in designing something that suits them - a person centred planning approach and if the resource can be used more flexibly than it is at the moment. The individual budget pilots will look at this on a larger scale. The question of whether the individual budget approach can be delivered within existing resources will be one of the key questions the evaluation of the pilots will be answering.

We know that changing from one system to another cannot always be done without some investment - the pilot sites have a small amount of money to spend on making their projects happen.

How do individual budgets link up with the Health and Social Care White Paper?

Individual Budgets were an integral part of the adult social care Green Paper Independence, Well-being and Choice. In the consultation that followed the idea of Individual Budgets was responded to positively. They are clearly an important part of the new White Paper which continues the Green Paper's focus on person-centred services to put individuals in control of their support.

The government said it would pilot individual budgets with a view to rolling them out nationally should they prove successful. This commitment was made in a number of policy documents:

- Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People (Strategy Unit, January 2005)
- Opportunity Age (Department for Work and Pensions, March 2005)
- Independence, Well-being and Choice (Department of Health, March 2005)

Further information

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