

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 20 May 2014

Progress on the Implementation of Self-directed Support in Children and Families

Item number 7.12

Report number

Executive/routine

Wards All

Executive summary

The Scottish Government launched the 10 year National Strategy for Self-Directed Support in 2010, signalling a significant shift in the way in which social care support is delivered in Scotland.

The focus of the Strategy is to offer families the option to exercise choice and control in the way they receive support for their child/young person. Families will require to be assessed for eligibility and can then be offered an indicative budget which is based on the agreed individual outcomes for their child/young person.

This report sets out the progress made in Edinburgh for the implementation of the National Strategy and in particular, the requirements of the Social care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. It seeks approval for the proposed approach to be taken in specified areas.

Links

Coalition pledges	P1
Council outcomes	CO3
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

Progress on the Implementation of Self-directed Support in Children and Families

Recommendations

The Council is asked to:

- 1.1 note the progress being made in implementing the requirements of the national Strategy for Self- directed Support and the Social Care (Self- directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, in respect of children and families.
- 1.2 agree the approach being taken to the development of a Funding Allocation System to inform people of the indicative budget available to meet their social care needs.

Background

- 2.1 The Scottish Government's vision for the future delivery of social care support is set out in 'Self-directed Support a National Strategy for Scotland' published in 2010 and the Social care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 which came into effect on 1 April 2014. Draft regulations and statutory guidance relating to the Act were the subject of public consultation during the summer of 2013. The Council's response to the consultation was approved by Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on the 6th of August 2013. The Scottish Government published guidance in January 2014.
- 2.2 The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 places a number of duties on local authorities. The main duties are set out below:
 - 2.2.1 To have regard to the following principles when carrying out its duties:
 - 2.2.1.1 Children, young people and families must have as much involvement as they wish in both the assessment of their needs and the provision of any support to meet these needs;
 - 2.2.1.2 Children, young people and families must be provided with any assistance that is reasonably required to enable them to express their views about the options available to them, and make an informed choice about these options;
 - 2.2.1.3 Local authority employees and representatives must collaborate with the individual in relation to the assessment of their needs and provision of support to meet them;

- 2.2.1.4 Local authority employees and representatives must take reasonable steps to facilitate the principles that a person's dignity and right to participate in community life are respected.
- 2.2.2 To offer children, young people and families eligible for social care support a choice of four mechanisms, referred to as the four options of self-directed support, through which their care and support needs can be met which meet agreed outcomes.
 - 2.2.2.1 Option 1 – a direct payment – the money available to meet the child/young person's needs is transferred to them in order for them to purchase and manage their own care;
 - 2.2.2.2 Option 2 – the child/young person requiring support chooses the way in which their support will be provided and asks the Council or a third party to arrange it on their behalf;
 - 2.2.2.3 Option 3 – the council chooses and arranges the support;
 - 2.2.2.4 Option 4 – the child/young person's needs and outcomes are met through a mix of the above options.
- 2.2.3 To provide a child/young person, and their family who will be offered the four options of self-directed support an estimate of how much the Council thinks it will cost to meet their needs (indicative budget); this is the amount available to them and their social worker or whoever is supporting them, to plan how their needs will be met and will achieve agreed outcomes.
- 2.2.4 To facilitate the development of a diverse market with a variety of suppliers offering a wide range of services for families.
- 2.3 The Council must implement the new legislation for all new referrals and all reviews of existing service users taking place after April 2014. Existing service users will be advised of their rights under the self-directed support legislation, as part of the ongoing review process. It is envisaged that all existing service users will have been transferred to one of the four options of self-directed support within a period of three years from the implementation of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013.

Overall approach to implementing personalisation and self-directed support

- 3.1 The Council's strategic approach to the implementation of self-directed support has been to take the opportunity to carry out a wider review of the way in which social care to individuals and families of all ages is provided in Edinburgh. This approach has involved considering not only the requirements of the National Self-directed Support Strategy and Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, but also wider considerations, for example the recommendations of the Christie Commission on Public Sector Reform.
- 3.2 Delivery of the changes required for personalisation and self directed support is being taken forward through a programme approach led by Health and Social Care on behalf of the Council. It involves Children and Families, Finance and Legal services, partners from the third and independent sectors and people who use social care services. The Personalisation Programme has nine separate workstreams, each of which is dealing with a key aspect of the agenda. Children and Families has its own workstream as well as representation in the other eight (Prevention, New Models of Delivery; Market Shaping; Financial Frameworks; Communication and Engagement; Network to Shape our Future; Workforce and Organisational Development and Supporting Infrastructure), ensuring that the interests of children and families are taken into account fully.

Embedding the principles

- 3.3 The principles underpinning the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, reflect core social work values: treating people with dignity and respect; involving and collaborating with people in order to identify how best to meet their needs and aspirations; supporting people to exercise informed choice; and take part in the life of their community. The introduction of the new legislation provides a welcome opportunity for the Council and its employees to reflect on the extent to which these principles are embedded in practice and to consider ways in which the principles can be reinforced. This has led to two main developments:
- 3.3.1 the development of a new outcome focused assessment tool, which encourages a shared approach to assessment;
- 3.3.2 the development of an online resource directory Edinburgh Choices containing information about a wide range of services available across the city from community activities to mainstream care and support services. The directory is available to both professionals and the general public, with the organisations whose details are included in the directory taking responsibility for updating their own information regularly.

- 3.4 The approach being taken to assessment and the identification of desired outcomes also encourages staff to focus not only on the assessed needs, which the Council has a statutory duty to meet; but to support people to connect with other activities within their communities, which may assist them to meet other needs and outcomes outside the remit of statutory services.

Offering the four options of self-directed support

- 3.5 The four options of self-directed support are set out in section 2.2 above.
- 3.6 The Council currently offers direct payments as an alternative to the provision of care and support services and so is already in a position to offer Option 1.
- 3.7 Option 3 is the way in which most care and support services are currently provided - the Council selecting and arranging the most appropriate form of support following assessment. The challenge will be to ensure that people whose support is arranged or provided through Option 3 have the opportunity to benefit from the same kind of innovative services available to those using Options 1 and 2.
- 3.8 Option 2 is not currently offered by the Council, it provides a mechanism through which people can exercise more control over the way in which their care and support needs are met, without having to take on responsibility for managing the money themselves through a direct payment. Typically the way in which Option 2 might work is as follows:
- 3.8.1 the local authority identifies the amount of money available to meet the individual's support needs, based on an assessment;
- 3.8.2 the individual, with support if required, selects the support services they would like and asks the local authority either to procure or arrange that support on their behalf, or to delegate the resource to one or more third party providers who will provide and or procure the support on their behalf;
- 3.8.3 The local authority or third party provider manages the support as directed by the individual and provides the individual with regular statements detailing how their personal budget has been utilised.
- 3.9 The arrangement described above is sometimes referred to as an Individual Service Fund.
- 3.10 In practice, the implementation of the proposed arrangements to offer Option 2 will mean:
- 3.10.1 the Council managing 'virtual' budgets for individuals and procuring services at the individual's request, from providers chosen by the individual;
- 3.10.2 third and independent sector providers who choose to do so, managing virtual budgets on behalf of individuals, including paying themselves for

directly provided services and procuring services from other providers as directed by the individual service user.

3.11 It is proposed that the Council adopts the following definition of Individual Service Funds (ISF):

3.11.1 An **Individual Service Fund** allows people to have increased control over the way in which their care and support needs are met without the responsibilities of a direct payment. The key aspects of an Individual Service Fund are:

3.11.1.1 the Personal Budget is managed by a service provider chosen by the individual (which can include the Council) on their behalf;

3.11.1.2 the individual decides how they want the Personal Budget to be spent;

3.11.1.3 the service provider is accountable to the individual;

3.11.1.4 the service provider commits to spend the individual's Personal Budget only on meeting the needs and outcomes set out in the individual's support plan;

3.11.1.5 the individual can choose to have some of their Personal Budget spent on purchasing services from other providers although the budget is managed on their behalf by the main provider.

3.12 Scotland Excel is working with a number of local authorities, including the City of Edinburgh Council, to develop a model contract in respect of Individual Service Funds. It is proposed that the Council only agrees to the operation of Individual Service Funds by organisations that are willing to sign up to the terms and conditions within the Scotland Excel model contract.

3.13 Option 4 recognises that the needs of some individuals may best be met by a combination of Options 1, 2 and 3. It places a duty on local authorities to make such a combination available. In practice, as long as the Council is able to offer the first three options, it can also offer Option 4.

3.14 It is vital that people are supported appropriately to make informed choices about the most appropriate option of self-directed support for them. In some circumstances, individuals will be clear from the outset about the option they want to choose, whilst for others the right option will only become clear once they have decided how they want their care and support needs to be met. In the main, this support will be provided through assessment and care management services within Children and Families. However, in the spirit of the legislation, people also need to have the option to seek independent advice about the best option for them and the most effective way of meeting their care and support needs, in a way that also helps them achieve their aspirations. It is not possible at this stage to quantify the likely level of demand for this type of independent

brokerage service. It is therefore proposed that, with Health and Social Care, officers identify two existing providers of information and advice services as the preferred providers to offer this service during 2014/15, which will allow a more detailed analysis of demand to be undertaken.

- 3.15 The option of self-directed support chosen by the individual will be discussed as part of the regular review process to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the individual, operating as it should and that it continues to be the most appropriate option. A system is already in place to audit the use of direct payments and address any issues which arise. Audit arrangements will also be put in place in respect of Individual Service Funds.

Allocation of resources to individuals

- 3.16 In order for individuals to exercise choice over how their care and support needs are met, they require some idea of the amount of money available to meet those needs. The legislation refers to this estimate by the Council as the “relevant amount”. In practice, it is usually referred to as the “indicative budget”. The indicative budget is the amount of money, which the individual and their social worker or whoever else is assisting them to develop their support plan, should use as a guide. It will be vital to ensure that both workers and individuals understand that the ‘indicative budget’ is an estimate and not an absolute entitlement that they can spend up to. The duty of the Council is to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to meet the eligible needs of the individual in a way that also helps achieve the individual’s agreed outcomes. If the individual and the Council agree that the needs and outcomes of the individual can be met for less than the indicative amount, this will be the amount allocated to the individual and referred to as their ‘personal budget’. A mechanism also needs to be established to deal with situations where the cost of the proposed support plan is higher than the indicative budget. In all cases a costed support plan setting out how the needs and outcomes of the individual will be met must be agreed by the Council and the individual before any of the options of self-directed support can be put in place.
- 3.17 The proposed approach being developed in Edinburgh is to use a Funding Allocation System, which links the allocation of resources to the assessed level of an individual’s need and the overall available budget.
- 3.18 The level of need will be identified using both the revised current Section 23 Assessment of Need and Risk alongwith the outcome focused Funding Allocation Questionnaire, which has been developed in line with the Getting It Right for Every Child well-being indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included).The tool also allows the social worker to refine further their assessment of the person’s level of need by matching them to a banding within the assessed level of need (see Appendix 1).

- 3.19 As there are no new resources available to fund self-directed support on an ongoing basis the conversion of the score generated through the outcome focused assessment into an indicative budget needs to take account of the budget available to meet the cost of providing social care support.
- 3.20 It is the budgets used to provide or procure these services now, which will be allocated to individuals through the Funding Allocation System. In many cases, people will use their personal budgets to procure existing services, although in the future it is increasingly likely that people will choose to access different forms of support.
- 3.21 Services that are provided in response to a crisis or that form part of an assessment in order to determine a person's long-term needs, will not be accessed through self-directed support.
- 3.22 In order to calibrate the Funding Allocation System and establish the relationship between scores generated through the outcome focused assessment and the cost of meeting an individual's needs, a sampling exercise has been undertaken. This has involved the completion of 100 assessments using the outcome focused assessment tool. The data from these assessments/reviews are being extracted, together with information about the package of care put in place and analysed to establish the link between scores and costs. Individuals whose assessments have generated the same score should receive care packages of a similar cost; with high scores resulting in high cost packages and low scores in low cost. In reality, the situation is more complicated, with discrepancies resulting from differences between service user groups or different providers charging different rates. Work is underway to complete further analysis of the data and arrive at a cost neutral calibration for the Funding Allocation System by the end of June 2014.
- 3.23 The indicative budget generated through the Funding Allocation System is an estimate of the cost of meeting an individual's care and support needs. The indicative budget is not an absolute entitlement and the cost of the agreed support plan is unlikely to be exactly the same as the indicative budget. In reality, it is expected that the Funding Allocation System will deal with 80 – 90% of all cases. Very high cost placements are excluded from SDS to avoid the risk of the calibration inflating allocations unnecessarily.
- 3.24 The proposed Funding Allocation System has been developed in line with the principle that any system adopted by the City of Edinburgh Council should be:
- 3.24.1 empowering – so that people know their entitlement, in order that they can determine how best their needs can be met;
 - 3.24.2 transparent and simple to understand and use;
 - 3.24.3 equitable – applied consistently, regardless of which option the person selects;
 - 3.24.4 legal – consistent with legislation, case law and the duty of care;

- 3.24.5 sustainable – sufficient to allow people to meet their needs and stay safe, whilst also being affordable, taking account of the Council’s financial position;
 - 3.24.6 flexible – allowing for professional judgement and exceptional circumstances;
 - 3.24.7 encouraging innovation and allowing people to exercise real choice in the way in which their personal budget is utilised to meet agreed outcomes;
 - 3.24.8 reasonable – logical, consistent and taking account of individual circumstances;
 - 3.24.9 efficient – bureaucracy should be minimised.
- 3.25 The amount of an individual’s personal budget will be reassessed in the light of any changes in need or circumstances identified through the regular review process operating in Children and Families.
- 3.26 Following consideration of this report, a draft policy in respect of personalisation and self-directed support in relation to Children and Families will be completed.

Children in Need

- 3.27 The Self-Directed Support legislation applies to the provision of services under Section.22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 which requires a local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need; and, so far as is consistent with that duty, promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to the children’s needs. These services may be provided to members of the child’s family, and in exceptional circumstances cash payments have always been a legal option.
- 3.28 Further work is required to clarify which types of services are included in the requirement to offer the four options as detailed above in Section 2.2. The Statutory Guidance makes clear that in certain circumstances local authorities do have discretion not to make this offer.
- 3.29 The critical factor in exercising this discretion is the form of support, in particular, whether the particular form of support which has been decided is necessary in the individual’s case is incapable of being delivered through the 2013 Act’s four options, that is instances where the nature of the support means that it cannot be delivered through an alternative self-directed option such as a direct payment or individual service fund.
- 3.30 Draft guidelines for professionals provided by ADSW suggests that the formal offer of the four options does not apply:
- 3.30.1 when a person’s lifestyle requires stabilising before their longer term support needs are identified and addressed, nor;

- 3.30.2 when a person's outcomes can be best achieved through a relationship with a practitioner, access to universal services or community resources rather than through access to support that requires an individual budget.
- 3.31 There are therefore many cases, classed as "children in need" cases, in which at particular times it will not be appropriate to offer the four options. It is possible that as circumstances change, for example with the establishment of a long term stable support plan, it may become appropriate.
- 3.32 It is recognised in the statutory guidance and the Direct Payments Regulations 2014 that there can be circumstances in which making a direct payment might place a vulnerable person at risk, and in that situation the local authority is not required to make the payment.
- 3.33 The statutory guidance and the advice in the ADSW guidelines offer scope for interpretation and in the early stages of implementation it will be necessary to have legal advice on the conditions that would be likely to lead to legal challenge. Any such advice will be combined with consideration and analysis of the work involved in typical "children in need" cases.
- 3.34 The underlying principles and values behind the Self Directed Support legislation should apply in all cases, including those to which Self Directed Support duties may not apply. For example there will be cases in which it may be helpful to disaggregate the elements of provision with a view to considering whether it would be helpful to give more control over the provision directly to the family.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The Council meets the requirements of the Social Care (Self –directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 which will be evidenced by:
 - 4.1.1 compliance with the principles underpinning the legislation;
 - 4.1.2 the ability to offer people who are eligible for social care support four options as to how that support is organised and managed;
 - 4.1.3 the ability to notify people eligible for the four options of self-directed support of an estimate of the cost of meeting their care needs and support needs;
 - 4.1.4 the emergence of new types of services to meet care and support needs.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The Implementation of the requirements of the Social care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 by April 2014, requires a change in the way in which support is provided to children, young people and families eligible for assistance. Rather than providing or arranging services to meet the assessed need, the Council is required to provide to families an estimate of the cost of meeting their social care needs and to then support them to exercise as much choice and control as they wish in meeting these needs, within the resources available. In the longer term this may lead to significant change in the range and types of services available.
- 5.2 The report sets out the way in which it is proposed the City of Edinburgh Council responds to the new duties by implementing a Funding Allocation System, calibrated to ensure as far as possible that the financial impact of introducing self-directed support is neutral.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The implementation of Self-directed Support across Edinburgh is thought by Scottish Government to be cost neutral. There will, however, be work load pressures in the implementation of this new way of working particularly in the Disability Practice Team.
- 6.2 The uncertainty in the future shape of services will be monitored closely and will inform future market shaping of both in-house and external providers.
- 6.3 Despite the amount of work which is being undertaken to ensure the Funding Allocation System is calibrated to meets the needs of individuals and to be affordable, this is to some extent uncharted territory. Audit Scotland has recently identified as a risk for all Scottish councils the requirement to provide individuals

with an estimate of the cost of meeting their care and support needs. This risk needs to be managed and monitored carefully.

- 6.4 The operation of the Funding Allocation System will be closely monitored to evaluate the following factors:
 - 6.4.1 the Funding Allocation System is sufficiently flexible to be adjusted in response to issues identified through experience in operating the system;
 - 6.4.2 the Funding Allocation System is calibrated in order both to meet the needs of individuals and remain affordable to the Council.
- 6.5 In order to mitigate against the inherent risks involved in such a significant change to the allocation of resources, the following controls will be put in place from 1 April 2014:
 - 6.5.1 all assessments will be checked by a Funding Allocation Panel prior to the generation of an indicative budget, to ensure that the detail within the assessment supports the level of need identified by the social work practitioner;
 - 6.5.2 any requests for a level of funding over the amount of the indicative budget will be subject to consideration and approval by a senior manager;
 - 6.5.3 monitoring will take place on a monthly basis comparing:
 - 6.5.3.1 the indicative budget with the amount of funding allocated and agreed through support planning;
 - 6.5.3.2 expenditure on new cases compared with that for the same period during the previous year.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The fundamental principles of self-directed support are choice and control, enabling people to choose how to live their life and have control over the way in which their care needs are met. The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 seeks to ensure that the principles of human rights and equality are central to the delivery of social care by placing a duty on local authorities to have regard to inclusion, collaboration and dignity when carrying out their duties. This report details the way in which it is proposed that these principles are embedded in Edinburgh.
- 7.2 There is an overall Equality Rights Impact Assessment which has been completed in respect of the Personalisation Programme and separate assessments are being undertaken on specific aspects of the programme, such as the assessment tool and the Funding Allocation System.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report have been considered in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties. There are no sustainable impacts in relation to the implementation of Self-directed Support legislation.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 All parents and carers of children with disabilities who currently receive a service were invited to consult on self-directed support (SDS), service provision and related issues. The consultation consisted of an online/paper survey and three focus groups. Parents/carers were contacted by letter, through a newsletter and through partner agencies and providers. A total of 52 parents/carers responded to the online survey and 30 people attended the focus groups. Some people attended a focus group and completed the survey.(See Appendix 2).
- 9.2 It is recognised by the Scottish Government and Audit Scotland that the implementation of the Self-directed Support legislation will take time and will continue to be developmental. In order to support ongoing consultation a Parents/Carers Checkpoint Group has been established. It is proposed that the group will meet on a regular basis to discuss matters in relation to Self-Directed Support. There will therefore be ongoing consultation on the operation of the Funding Allocation System and other aspects of self-directed support over the coming months, as the Council continues to collaborate with key stakeholders through the Personalisation Programme.
- 9.3 A newsletter has been developed and issued on a 3 monthly basis through a school-bag drop to all children who receive special or additional education services. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep children and their families up to date with Self-Directed Support and service developments.
- 9.4 There has been regular engagement and consultation sessions with providers who support children with a disability. Self Directed Support legislation was introduced at an initial provider's event in September 2013 and looked at the possible impact on providers both existing and new. This was followed by a Soft Market Test which was designed by the Disability strategic development officers in discussion with colleagues from commissioning and procurement. This went out in October 2013. A second provider's event in March 2014, facilitated by advocacy group In-control, provided a forum for the soft market test to be discussed and to also look at the results of a consultation which was undertaken with parents and carers. The results of this consultation will help our providers develop their services in a more localised way by having information on demographics, priority areas for families and what families hope Self Directed Support will do for them.

Background reading / external references

National Self-directed Support Strategy

Social care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013

A Whole Systems Approach to Self-directed Support in Edinburgh

Response to Scottish Government Consultation on Draft Guidance and Regulations Linked to Self-directed Support.

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Links

Coalition pledges	P1 – Increase support for vulnerable children including help for families so that fewer go into care
Council outcomes	CO3 – Our children and young people in need, or with a disability, have improved life chances
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3 – Edinburgh’s children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Example of scoring system used within the Funding Allocation Questionnaire2. Extract from the Self-Directed Support and Service Provision Consultation Report January to February 2014

Appendix 1: Example of scoring system used within the Funding Allocation Questionnaire

7 To be safe			
No additional support required	Some support	Lots of support	Exceptional Support
0	14	22	27

No additional support is required – This would include children who:

- Are safe at home with their family.
- Avoid danger in the home most of the time (commensurate with their age)
- Are safer because of aids /adaptations in the house e.g safety gates, window locks etc.
- Are safe in their play and can be left alone in another room for short periods of time commensurate with their age and stage.

Some support is required – This would include children who:

- For the most part are able to stay safe.
- Can struggle to remember the explanation of risks and need to be continually reminded about danger.
- Can play safely for very short periods of time but needs an adult to regularly check that they are safe if they are unsupervised in a room in the home (more frequently than would usually be required for a child at their age and stage).

Lots of support is required – This would include children who:

- Have the ability to reach dangers in the home, and adult supervision in the same room is constantly needed to stop them from becoming hurt.
- Without continual supervision in the same room the child would be at risk of harm.
- Cannot move out of the way of danger or who, if unsupervised, would not be able to change their posture.
- There have been child welfare concerns about due to the behaviour/risks presented by others.

Exceptional support is required – This would include children who:

- Have an ability to place them self in danger even when they are continually supervised.
- Are subject to child protection measures and plans and require monitoring on a day to day basis by professionals to ensure their safety due to the behaviours/risks presented by others.

Appendix 2: Extract from the Self-Directed Support and Service Provision Consultation Report January to February 2014

In terms of Self-Directed Support, parents/carers were provided with information on the Scottish Government’s four possible options and asked which they would prefer:

Answer choice	Response
Option 1 – direct payment	19% (10)
Option 2 – the person directs the available support	0
Option 3 – the local authority arranges the support	4% (2)
Option 4 – a mix of the above	50% (26)
Don’t know enough to say at this stage	27% (14)

Parents/carers were asked if they had received information on Self-Directed Support:

Answer choice	Response
Yes	34% (17)
No	60% (30)
Not sure	6% (3)

Parents/carers raised a number of concerns in relation to SDS including:

- It could be a very isolating experience for young people and for parents – there might be much less opportunity for children to get to know each other and for parents to meet and discuss issues/share solutions.
- Concerns about Section 23 – inconsistency, delays in getting an assessment, being assessed as just under the level at which you would get a service meaning that you are not eligible whereas others are.
- SDS might be a way of closing down opportunities for children with complex needs – might be a cover for cutting budgets.
- It’s important for parents to have a named person to contact if things go wrong – getting to know families and building relationships really helps.

- Currently if things go wrong (e.g. if staff are off sick), Council staff or agencies have to arrange cover, if parents are responsible will they be able to do that?
- Children with invisible disabilities are often disadvantaged.
- Concerns about the effects of moving to a market system – will it cause disruption, will demand outstrip supply and lead to higher costs? How quickly will the market be able to respond to changing demand?
- Services need to be available in the first place for parents to choose them (at present, it's all very well having the entitlement but if there aren't staff or services available you can't access them).
- SDS might serve articulate, confident parents well but it might disadvantage others who are not so confident to find out what's available and make demands of services.
- Good relationships with social workers are key for families – the workers then know their context, issues and concerns and have a genuine understanding of what they need – will SDS help or hinder with building these relationships? (Often a simple phone call – 'how are things working out?' - is all that's needed rather than a formal meeting).
- That there won't be enough information available to make informed choices – there needs to be a lot of information about opportunities and services, problem-solving and how other parents have used SDS or direct payments.
- Relationships of trust with workers are key – high turnovers of staff, less experienced staff can cause difficulties. Often something as simple as a phone call every so often to ask how things are going would be really helpful.
- Although the assessed need is for the disabled child, the whole family, including siblings, are part of the situation and are affected – they need to be considered too.

Parents/carers saw SDS as offering a number of opportunities including:

- More flexibility and choice for parents – this sounds great.
- The ability to spend money on things other than services, i.e. to spend it on equipment or leisure opportunities, is really interesting.
- It should give parents the opportunity to mix and match opportunities and services – not just all of one thing and none of another.
- Sounds like a great idea but there are a lot of practical difficulties in making it work.